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59th year of publication

Iraqis go to the polls despite threats

Harry der Nederlanden

Whether the U.S. invasion of Iraq was foolish or timely, good or harmful, the elections (still days away as I write) mark an historical transition – not just for the Iraqi people but for the Islamic world. The Palestinians recently had an election, but this election is the only national democratic election to be held in this part of the world. Some will raise quibbles about how democratic an election could be under the threat of violence, with many afraid to vote, but the vast majority of Iraqis do see it as an important step and refused to be intimidated by threats from radical terrorists.

Amir Taheri, an expert on the area and the author of several books, wrote:

"Talk to Iraqis on any subject these days and you are likely to hear one word: *ba'ad*! This is short for the phrase '*ba'ad al-intikhabat*' which means 'after the elections.' Weddings are postponed until after the elections, as are business contracts, poetry recitals, the opening of new plays, the start of the football season, and, of course, the rebuilding of towns and villages wrecked by months of insurgency. Also put on hold are big projects financed by the \$18 billion US aid package and more than \$6 billion pledged by Europe, Japan and the Arab states. Never have so many people pinned so much hope on a single day of voting, Jan. 30, 2005, that is to give Iraq its first freely elected Parliament plus provincial and regional councils."

In the two to three weeks leading up to the elections, militants were increasingly targeting Iraqis rather than American troops or reconstruction workers, seeking to spread enough terror to keep Iraqis away from the polling stations.



Interim President Iyad Allawi and US Ambassador John Negroponte

They are determined to deprive the process and the resulting transitional government of any legitimacy. About two weeks prior an election official was dragged out of his car on a main street at midday and brutally executed. A number of other Iraqis have also paid with their lives for their involvement in the election process. The level of intimidation was fierce.

Several sources reported (Jan. 24) that militants spread leaflets in Baghdad warning voters that polling stations would be attacked on election day. There were about 6,000 polling stations planned (another source says 9,000), so it was impossible for American troops to provide adequate security for each and every one of them. The flyers warned that "those who dare to stand in the lines of death to participate in the elections will be responsible for the consequences that will be heavy."

"We promise to wash the streets of Baghdad with the blood of voters," they threatened. "To those of you who think you can vote and

then run away, we will shadow you and catch you, and we will cut off your heads and the heads of your children."

Voter intimidation

Despite the threats and assassinations, however, Iraqi candidates persisted. Those operating in Shiite and Kurdish areas were relatively safe, but in several of the largest cities in the so-called Sunni triangle, although they mustered the courage to let their names stand for office, a number of candidates did not want their names published. It is, therefore, understandable that some questioned the status of an election with "secret" candidates and called for them to be postponed till security was better.

Several Canadian and U.S. television segments preceding the elections interviewed a number of Iraqis, many of whom said they would not vote because of the danger. Others said they would not vote because it meant nothing anyway – the Americans were calling the shots. These news

segments left the impression that only a minority of Iraqis would turn out. Jeffrey Gettleman, correspondent for the *New York Times*, cited conflicting attitudes among Iraqis to suggest that the elections may serve merely to further divide the country. If enough Sunnis boycott, he said, "That would mean a humiliation for American forces and the new Iraqi government."

His article quoted the imam of a Sunni mosque in Baghdad as typical: "As long as my country is under occupation, I feel that my vote means nothing."

But Gettleman also quoted a Kurdish laborer in Baghdad, who said: "We will have a democracy, but not a perfect one."

A poll taken in Dec. and early Jan. (thus, before the worst of the intimidation) contradicted the impression that Iraqis would stay away in droves. Some 75 percent of eligible Iraqis registered to vote. According to a poll of almost 2,000 Iraqis, an overwhelming majority – over 80 percent – of Iraqis intended to vote. Even in Sunni areas, well over 50 percent of the people said they would vote if possible, while another 10 percent didn't know. Several Sunni leaders were urging their people to boycott the elections. (I'm not

sure how accurate the poll was for the Sunni area, as pollsters skipped those areas considered too dangerous.)

A more recent poll conducted by an Iraqi newspaper in

Baghdad, where intimidation was also intense, indicated that about two-thirds of those contacted planned to vote, half for religious parties and half for secular parties.

Of those who said they weren't planning to vote, one-third said it was out of fear of violence. Only about 12 percent cited the boycott.

Several Iraq watchers predicted that there would be a solid voter turnout in all but four of Iraq's 18 provinces. The sticker is that these four provinces contain some of the most populous cities – all in the Sunni triangle – accounting for about 7 percent of Iraq's 25 million people.

Sunni reluctance

Organizing for elections in the major cities in the Sunni triangle was so dangerous, campaigning was next to impossible except on television. American officials tried hard to get a higher level of participation, but about two weeks prior to the election, one of the Sunni parties dropped out and advised its people to boycott.

Kahlil Ashraf, writing in the *L.A. Times*, pointed out that the Americans badly want a decent level of Sunni participation to give the elections greater legitimacy. The more legitimacy, the less

Continued on p. 2...



Iraqi volunteers hang posters

News

Iraqis go to the polls *continued*

grounds militants will have afterward to continue their violent opposition to the government. Sunnis had a privileged place in the country under Saddam. Although they constitute less than 20 percent of the population, they dominated the entire country. They know, whether they vote or not, they will be a minority in a democratic Iraq. In the future, the Shiites, who make up 60 percent of the voters in Iraq (although they are a minority in the Islamic world as a whole), will dominate them. Since the Shiites suffered badly under Saddam, some Sunnis fear now they will be victimized.

The Americans were telling the Sunnis that, yes, they will be weaker than in the past, but if they did not participate, they would be much weaker than they need to be.

However, Mohsen Abdel Hamid, chairman of the Iraqi Islamic Party, the leading Sunni Arab political group, said: "This talk about the marginalization of the Sunnis is nothing more than political propaganda." (Quoted by Kahlil.) He argued that refusal to participate will strengthen his party's standing among Sunnis.

Some other Sunni leaders pointed to the elections a year ahead, after this vote for the transitional assembly, as more important. That will be the real election, they said. There will also be a chance to vote, probably this fall, to ratify the new constitution that will be hammered out under the auspices of the transitional government.

Other Sunnis, however, were participating and looking for ways to campaign under adverse circumstances.



Iraqi President Ghazi al-Yawer



A woman and child sit next to pro-election banner in the southern Iraqi town of Basra

Shiite hegemony

While the Sunnis looked forward to the election results with apprehension, the Shiites approached them with confidence. The senior Shia cleric Al-Sistani issued an edict (fatwah) saying it was everyone's religious duty to go out and vote.

"But if there's confidence," wrote Kahlil, "there is also awareness among Shiite leaders that, for the sake of national unity and stability, they will have to be graceful winners, despite their decades of subjugation under Sunni Arab rule and the insurgency that has left hundreds of Shiites dead. They must reach out to the Kurds in the north and the Sunni Arab minority, whose refusal to accept the new political order has fed the bloody insurgency."

Some Shiite leaders have even suggested granting extra seats to Sunnis in the transitional national assembly if the turnout is very low. American advisors have remarked that the Shiites have shown a surprising level of graciousness. This is especially surprising since recent terrorist attacks have deliberately targeted Shiites in an obvious attempt to incite hatred and conflict between the two groups. One of the latest car bombs killed Shiites who were just leaving a prominent mosque, and another targeted a Shiite wedding party.

Won't the elections create a Shiite hegemony in Iraq that will result in the suppression of Sunnis and Kurds? Neighboring Iran is also predominantly Shiite. Will Iraq become a theocratic

state like Iran? This question, posed by many commentators, is usually answered in the negative. Amir Taheri points out that the Shiites are divided among themselves. There are three sharply distinct groups and leaders as distinct as the anti-American cleric Muqtada Sadr who sparked the "Sadr city" insurgency and former Pentagon favorite Ahmad Chalabi.

Kurdish excitement

The Kurds in the north were probably more excited about this election than anyone. Things have been relatively peaceful in the Kurdish areas so campaigning has been conducted in the open. The turnout here was expected to be excellent, for it will be to their advantage. Although they were subject to brutal suppression under Saddam, the Kurds have benefited from several years of relative autonomy under the U.N., which imposed a no-fly zone over the area.

Barham Salih, Iraq's deputy prime minister for national security and one of the highest-ranking Kurds in the current government said, "Our aspirations are very high. It's an exciting moment in our history. This is the first time we Kurds have been allowed to take part in deciding the future of Iraq." (Quoted by Edmund Sanders of the *L.A. Times*.)

In negotiations leading up to the elections, Kurds have also been guaranteed that under a federalist system their minority rights will be protected.

Prospects for the future

Amir Taheri sketched a best case scenario and a worst case scenario for Iraq in 2005.

Best-case scenario:

"The election is held producing a Parliament that, in turn, will choose a new government of

Parties and the ballot

Despite the threats and intimidation, over 7,000 Iraqis let their names stand as candidates in the elections, on the federal and provincial level. Voters were not expected to identify and elect individual candidates by name. The voting went according to party. Each party drew up a list of names. The order was important because the first on the list were the first to be elected. Each party receives the right to a certain proportion of the 275 seats depending on the number of votes garnered. It's called proportional representation, a system that some want to introduce into Canada.

The ballot listed 111 parties, so it can't be said that Iraqis are apolitical. A number of parties entered into alliances or blocs for this election.

The largest bloc, quite naturally, is Shiite. The United Iraqi Alliance consists of 22 Shia parties. They have the backing of Iraq's senior cleric Ali al-Sistani and are therefore expected to win. The party has also received considerable support from Iran. But, as Edward Luttwak (*Globe and Mail*) and others have pointed out, Iraq's Shia clerics are not attracted to the Iranian model, which has resulted in a great loss of popularity for the clerics.

The Iraqi List, a group of six parties, is led by the interim Prime Minister Iyad Allawi. It is a secular slate that also includes some Sunnis and Kurds. According to a *L.A. Times* story (Jan. 26), Allawi has been gaining in popularity, despite having to overcome the drawback of being seen as a U.S. puppet. The story cites a poll in which one-third of respondents think he has been "very effective." His party was expected to come in second with 20 - 30 percent of the vote.

Among the other 47 parties are monarchists, communists and Christians. The latter are divided into Assyrian, Chaldean and Coptic parties. One of the monarchist candidates is a member of the royal family overthrown in 1958.

Expatriate Iraqis living in the U.S., Canada, the U.K. and other countries registered to vote in overwhelming numbers. Some in Canada and the U.S. traveled hundreds of miles, first to register and then to vote. About 80 percent of those eligible to vote in the U.S. are Chaldo-Assyrian Christians. They complained that polls were placed far from the places where they have settled.

A Nashville paper quoted one Iraqi who had driven three hours to register as declaring that it was worth it: "We can vote, and that means we are human beings," Hydar Albussairi, 28, said. "Now we are human beings."

national unity. Enjoying people-based legitimacy such a government would deprive the insurgency of its claim of fighting against foreign occupation. The US and coalition allies would be able to scale down their military presence while accelerating the recruitment, training and deployment of the new Iraqi armed forces and police. That would make it possible for the US-led coalition forces to be withdrawn by 2007, the most realistic date for such a move.

"Also in the best case scenario Iraq could mobilize its immense manpower and natural resources, to rebuild its economy. A little noticed report by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), issued last November, shows that even now the Iraqi economy is, relatively speaking, performing better than anyone else's in the Arab Middle East. The report makes a prediction that some might find audacious: In the next decade, Iraq

could become the engine of growth for the region."

The worst-case scenario:

"Widespread violence could disrupt the election while mass Sunni boycott casts doubt on the results. The insurgents could extend their attacks to Shiite areas, provoking Shiite counterattacks. This could lead to a de facto partition of the country or intermittent ethnic war of the kind Lebanon experienced in the 1970s and 1980s. President George W. Bush may try to stick it out until the end of his term. But his successor, lacking the stomach or the desire to stay the course, may galumph out of the quagmire. Then the Kurds may decide to set up a break-away state, provoking clashes with Turkey and Iran. Iraq could become a black hole sucking the Middle East into the unknown." (From Benador associates.)

Politics

Will Canada stand on guard for vulnerable people?

Gerald Vandezande

The House of Commons resumes sitting on Jan 31. Our MPs must make several historic decisions.

Some observers predict that the Liberals' minority government will first introduce its controversial "same-sex" legislation. It is considered constitutionally valid in view of the favorable advisory opinion issued by the Supreme Court of Canada on Dec. 9. Many expect that most Liberal MPs, willingly or otherwise, will support their government's legislative initiative and, with the "free" votes of Bloc Quebecois and NDP MPs, will pass the hotly debated bill, despite steadily increasing dissatisfaction with this major change in federal law and public policy.

Parliament should not approve the radical change in the traditional heterosexual definition of marriage without also considering the real alternative of a universal civil-union law that would bring about legal equality based on inclusive public justice for all – thus guaranteeing full respect for both heterosexual and homosexual relationships as well as the particular rights of the diverse faith-communities in our pluralistic, multi-faith society. The same-sex marriage debate will probably rage on. It will likely also be a "religious" issue during the next federal election. The role and scope of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms will also be vigorously discussed. The final outcome is by no means predictable.

The second contentious issue to be addressed by Parliament should be Canada's international peace-making role in the context of U.S. President Bush's ideological determination to "export freedom" through pre-emptive wars of "liberation."

In view of the U.S. Administration's deepening moral and financial commitment to the worsening war in Iraq, Parliament must decide how Canada will effectively exercise its treasured independence in response to Washington's demand that we join the peace-threatening, costly American missile defence system. How will we avoid participating in the militarization of international relations and the weaponization of space?

Last but not least, in the unforgettable wake of the horrible tsunami disaster in Asia and the continuing travesty in the Darfur of region of Sudan, what exactly will be Canada's long-term commit-

ment to the millions in danger and desperate need the world over?

Will Canada actively support the recommendations of a U.N.-sponsored report "Investing In Development" that reminded all concerned on Jan. 17 that in the coming decade more than 500 million people can escape from poverty and tens of millions can avoid certain death if the U.S., Japan and other rich countries (including Canada) keep their promises to vastly increase development aid? We all must keep in mind that, mainly in African and Asian countries, 1 billion people live on \$1 a day or less. Another 1.8 million live on just \$2 a day. How can we best help numerous desperate neighbors facing starvation and death?

In view of the widespread poverty confronting citizens and politicians, it was therefore encouraging to read most of the report by Parliament's Standing Committee on Finance, released just before Christmas. Regarding Foreign Aid, it states: "The Committee believes that the entire developed world has an obligation to help those in the world who are less fortunate. Like our witnesses, we believe that the benefits of assistance are more than just moral; they are economic as well." Right on!

Children have a right to shelter, food, water, information, support and freedom from abuse and coercion – all the things they require to grow and develop their full potential. But: the view of childhood that unites countries and peoples is at odds with the experience of most children around the world.

The all-party Committee's recommendation 33 rightly urges: "The federal government (should) keep its commitment to contributing 0.7% of Canada's Gross Domestic Product to foreign aid. Moreover, the government should take a leadership role and work with the private sector and nongovernmental organizations in order to identify means by which the citizens of developing countries might be assisted. Finally, the government should ensure that the hemispheric trade negotiations to which Canada is a party do not adversely affect developing countries."

Numerous Canadians pray and work for the immediate implementation of these and other concrete recommendations. As well, we advocate the abolition of nuclear arms and other weapons of mass destruction, the prevention of war, and the promotion of non-violent means of conflict resolution and

Ukraine: two Viktors, one victor



Principalities & Powers

David T. Koyzis

Last month Viktor Yushchenko was sworn in as Ukraine's president after a contested election which saw the second ballot repeated in late December over allegations of corruption and fraud. This ballot confirmed the victory of Yushchenko over Viktor Yanukovich, whose supporters were thought to have engaged in underhand tactics in the initial second round. Yushchenko is being touted as the first *real* post-communist president in Ukraine, much as Lech Walesa and Vaclav Havel guided Poland and the Czech Republic respectively in breaking with their Soviet-era pasts. But the reality may be more complex than this.

Much as media pundits have talked up the red state/blue state cleavage in the last two American elections, a similar phenomenon can be observed in Ukraine. Yanukovich's support base is in the east and south of the country, which is largely russified and has a fairly weak sense of distinct Ukrainian national identity. Much of the territory along the Black Sea corresponds to *Novorossiya* (New Russia), which was captured from the Ottoman Turks by Catherine the Great in the late eighteenth century and subsequently settled by Russians. If the inhabitants adhere to any religion, it is Orthodox Christianity.

By contrast, the northwestern hinterlands, including Lviv and (to some extent) Kiev, are where Yushchenko enjoys the most support. These lands were for centuries controlled by Lithuania and Poland and also came into Russian hands under Catherine. Christian beliefs tend to be more fervently held and the predominant church is the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, a Byzantine-rite body in communion with Rome. The Ukrainian language is more widely spoken here, which reinforces a stronger sense of national identity.

Ukraine, in short, is a divided country. Like the double-headed eagle of the old Russian Empire, it looks both east and west. Yushchenko may have won the presidency of his country, but this in no way guarantees that Yanukovich's supporters will

simply quit the struggle and come on side of the victor, even if they formally acknowledge the legitimacy of his presidency. Given Ukraine's turbulent history, coupled with the absence of a tradition of loyal opposition, Yushchenko will likely find himself thwarted at every turn as he attempts to institute his reform agenda.

This suggests that the victory of the "right" candidate may not be enough to bring Ukraine into the ranks of constitutional democracies. Perhaps it's time to consider more fundamental constitutional changes. Two reforms might be appropriate.

First, Ukraine should consider devolving a certain degree political authority from the centre to its 25 oblasts (districts). In other words, it should adopt a federal division of powers. Crimea already has its own semi-autonomous parliament. There is no reason not to establish similar regional governments elsewhere. To be sure, this would not eliminate the old Soviet ways altogether, but it would limit their influence and permit the rest of the country to move on.

Second, it might be wise to abolish a single state presidency and institute a Swiss-style executive council with a rotating chair. This would enable the disparate regions of the country to be fully represented at the centres of decision-making. Moreover, it would eliminate the winner-take-all character of presidential elections, thereby preventing some parts of the country from feeling shut out of the political process.

Yet what is most needed in Ukraine is not so much institutional reform as a tradition of respect for the rule of law, coupled with the willingness to tolerate and, if need be, to become a loyal opposition. These will, of course, take time and patience to develop.

David T. Koyzis teaches political science at Redeemer University College, Ancaster, Ontario, and is the author of the award-winning *Political Visions and Illusions* (InterVarsity Press). His weblog can be found at: <http://byzantinecalvinist.blogspot.com/>.



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social justice in a sustainable world. Together with millions of people, we hope and strive for a peaceful future that proves, once again, "Christmas is also about giving, in both words and actions" so that *all* people can live in freedom, enjoy community, because they experience solidarity based on justice.

Parliament would do Canada proud and render the world a huge service by unanimously adopting and immediately implementing foreign policies and aid programs that demonstrate our shared values as caring people who generously act to protect the poor and powerless everywhere. Will our MPs rise to the challenge and stand on guard for justice for the vulnerable? And will the PM conscientiously take the lead? He owes it to Canada and the world!

Gerald Vandezande, 262 Pitfield Rd, Scarborough ON, TEL: 416-293-8912

Editorial

Let us now join Bush in praise of freedom

Harry der Nederlanden

U.S. President George Bush's inaugural speech sparked considerable excitement and discussion in the press and on television. Quite a few commentators, even those outside the circle of Bushophiles, praised it as one of the most powerful inaugural speeches ever. This, despite the fact that most pundits had warned in the days leading up to the inauguration that such speeches are invariably dull and disappointing, especially for second-term presidents.

It was also described as signaling a huge shift in American foreign policy. This, despite the fact that historians had explained that inaugural speeches are not occasions for outlining new policies. That is reserved for the State of the Union speech given later. Those who read into Bush's speech overweening and perhaps warlike ambitions to impose American style democracy wherever it suits its purposes were by and large those eager to see Bush as motivated by insidious designs arising from his "fundamentalism" or from a "neoconservative cabal."

Whether the speech was a rousing restatement of ideals that have percolated in the soul of American politics from the beginning or whether it was a launchpad for the folly of further invasions depends on your view of Bush and, to a lesser degree, of American interventions in general.

I personally found the speech edifying and inspiring, but after reflecting on parts of the speech, I also had some second thoughts. But I will not assume that all CC readers have heard or read the speech. Bush is, after all, not our president. A sampling of quotes from the speech is in order, if only to give you taste of the rhetoric in the good sense of the word.

"We have seen our vulnerability [referring to 9-11], and we have seen its deepest source. For as long as whole regions of the world simmer in resentment and tyranny – prone to ideologies that feed hatred and excuse murder, violence will gather and multiply in destructive power, and cross the most defended borders, and raise a mortal threat. There is only one force of history that can break the reign of hatred and resentment, and expose

the pretensions of tyrants, and reward the hopes of the decent and tolerant, and that is the force of human freedom.

"We are led, by events and common sense, to one conclusion: The survival of liberty in our land increasingly depends on the success of liberty in other lands. The best hope for peace in our world is the expansion of freedom in all the world.

"America's vital interests and our deepest beliefs are now one. From the day of our founding, we have proclaimed that every man and woman on this earth has rights and dignity and matchless value because they bear the image of the maker of heaven and earth. Across the generations, we have proclaimed the imperative of self-government, because no one is fit to be a master, and no one deserves to be a slave.

"...So it is the policy of the United States to seek and support the growth of democratic movements and institutions in every nation and culture, with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world.

"We will persistently clarify the choice before every ruler and every nation: The moral choice between oppression, which is always wrong, and freedom, which is eternally right.

America will not pretend that jailed dissidents prefer their chains, or that women welcome humiliation and servitude, or that any human being aspires to live at the mercy of bullies. We will encourage reform in other governments by making clear that success in our relations will require the decent treatment of their own people.

"...Today, America speaks anew to the peoples of the world. All who live in tyranny and hopelessness can know the United States will not ignore your oppression or excuse your oppressors. When you stand for your liberty, we will stand with you.

"We go forward with complete confidence in the eventual triumph of freedom. Not because history runs on the wheels of inevitability; it is human choices that move events. Not because we consider ourselves a chosen nation; God moves and chooses as He wills. We have confidence because freedom is the permanent hope of mankind, the hunger in dark places, the longing of the soul."

Maybe I'm just a sucker for high-flown rhetoric, but these sentiments do speak to me. Many remarked on the idealism of the speech with its religious echoes and repeated references to freedom and the transforming power of freedom. Charles Colson said he "could hear in [Bush's] words echoes of Luke 4:18: 'Proclaim liberty to the captives.'" Bush "made clear, freedom is God's gift to mankind. It cannot be given nor taken away by governments," said Colson.

Colson also picked up on a perceptive comment by an unnamed White House insider, who said that "Bush is seizing the mantle of idealism from contemporary liberalism. In the twentieth century, the idea of spreading human liberty and defending human dignity was the cause of liberals, especially under Presidents Roosevelt, Truman, and Kennedy. Conservatism was primarily a reactionary political movement, unwilling to engage in bold, idealistic causes."

Robert Kagan, hardly a Bush booster, declared: "His goals are now the antithesis of conservatism – they are revolutionary."

That's startling, isn't it? To have liberals, who have been more closely affiliated with the tradition of the French Revolution, declare with some alarm that the most conservative president in recent history is spouting revolutionary rhetoric. In one place Bush uses the phrase "fire in the minds of men":

"By our efforts, we have lit a fire as well as a fire in the minds of men. It warms those who feel its power; it burns those who fight its progress. And one day this untamed fire of freedom will reach the darkest corners of our world." This phrase is closely associated with the ideals of the French revolution, and Bush comes close to defining it in those terms.

Mark Shields on the Lehrer News Hour also recognized it as revolutionary rhetoric. "This is not just nation building. This is world building!" he exclaimed. Colson agrees. And is delighted at the switch of places.

This reminds us that American ideals have always been a mix of Enlightenment and Christian ideas. The ideal of freedom sometimes derives its content more from one tradition than another, but both are always jostling for recognition. This is, in part, what has enabled liberals and conservatives in America to keep working together. So the ambiguity isn't wholly a bad thing.

Nevertheless, it makes me stop to reexamine my own reaction to this idealistic manifesto: Is it just the Christian content that resonates with me or am I also turned on by the revolutionary tradition?

Many of us have grown so weary of the postmodernist suspicion of any articulation of permanent ideals, we find a bold statement of faith in one of the core ideals of Western culture refreshing. "Way to go!" we find ourselves saying, it's high time someone confidently affirms that there is some good in this great culture that has given birth to all the institutions that sustain our liberties and way of life. How can the next generation own them if all we do is find fault with them. How can we win the battle for the minds of people if we are always apologizing for our cultural ideals?

The title of Bush's speech is: "There is no justice without freedom." Kuyperians have often argued the converse as well: "There is no freedom without justice." Kris Kristoferson of the *New York Times* scoffed: "Freedom's just another word for nothin' left to lose."

When the terrorists struck their horrific blow on 9-11, many were outraged when some liberals suggested perhaps if there were greater equality and less poverty in the world, there wouldn't be this resentment and violence directed at America. Bush is making a parallel argument: if there were more democracy and freedom in the world, there wouldn't be this resentment and violence to disturb our peace. Both strike me as simplistic, but they do state a partial truth.

The world would be a poorer place without those who seek to vividly hold up to us ideals and standards to strive for together as citizens of our different nations, of the world and – most fundamentally – of the Kingdom of God.

As ambassadors of the Kingdom of God, we must ask ourselves is this a "cheap freedom" I'm extolling (like Bonhoeffer's "cheap grace")? Christ paid a price for our freedom, and sharing that freedom means we must be willing to pay a price to uphold the freedom-with-justice of our neighbors near and far.

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EDITORIAL TEAM & PRODUCTION STAFF

Editor: Harry der Nederlanden editor@christiancourier.ca
Circulation: Rose der Nederlanden
subscriptions@christiancourier.ca
Accounts/Advertising Manager: Ineke Medcalf-Strayer
ads@christiancourier.ca

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Christian Courier

1 Hiscott St. St. Catharines ON L2R 1C7

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Letters

Discussing the merits of the Bush doctrine

In his last letter in this dialogue, Mr. Antonides despairs the prospects of a greater rapport among fellow believers. I agree that there is a wide divergence between his perception and my own on these issues. Nevertheless, we are bound to hold on to each other, notwithstanding the failure of consensus. In the interests of facilitating a better and more fruitful parley, let me offer some suggestions.

1. We must each be responsive to the other's arguments. Initially Antonides tendered Podhoretz' defense of the "Bush doctrine" as "the voice of reason and fairness". I responded at some length with a criticism of that "voice". Mr. Antonides' response to my arguments was that I was omitting to account for the atrocities being perpetrated by the insurgents in post invasion Iraq. Not a word has he spoken in response to my censure of the Bush doctrine with its dangerous elements of unilateralism, preemption, and regime change. The merits of the "Bush" doctrine have fallen out of our debate. Nor has Mr. Antonides ever responded to the WMD deception that occurred in the run-up to the invasion. This deception raises grave and disquieting moral questions, which to this day go unanswered, in spite of an intervening election.

2. We must not swallow whole and uncritically the ideologies of others. Mr. Antonides says that he "comes clean" by listing those authors and sources that he considers true and authoritative. His list did not surprise me. This is, by and large, a list of the neo-conservative ideologues whose ideas are the major influence on U. S. foreign policy at present. I question why a thoughtful fellow believer would subscribe to the extremity of such views, rather than weighing them critically? Why does Mr. Antonides "choose to put far more stock in" the views of the "mostly American" periodicals, and authors that he lists? With-

out a convincing apologia for their relative veracity or authority, the recitation of the list is not helpful, and to the extent that it betrays a too ready acceptance of other's views, may in fact impede the discussion. Mr. Antonides might be well served by listening to those with whom he is not inclined to agree. To dismiss other points of view out of hand as not worthy of consideration is narrow and isolating. The breadth of our gaze must be expansive, albeit critical. Mr. Antonides and my interlocution initially arose out of the fact that we had both read the Podhoretz polemic. In having read the Podhoretz essay, I had not accidentally strayed into the "other" camp. We each must take an interest in and consider the views of others, even if we must finally disagree with them.

3. Lastly we must not misrepresent each other. In his letter of December 20, Mr. Antonides says that I suggested that "there is some justification for the murder of peaceful civilian workers in Iraq". This is a distortion of what I said. I am a practicing lawyer. Justification of murder is anathema to me. What I said is that the killing of the civilian workers was a response to the occupation. I said this in contradiction of Mr. Antonides' assertion that the workers were being killed because of their "crimes" of restoration of the infrastructure (an argument that I confess I don't understand yet). Thousands of civilians and soldiers have died in the Iraqi debacle. Who will justify any of these deaths including the four "murders" that Mr. Antonides complains of? Not I. I said that violence begets violence. I did not say that violence justifies violence. The escalation of violence that we presently see demonstrates the futility of violent military and militant "solutions" to the problems of how to share this planet together. That's my point.

Jim Joosse, LL.B.
Edmonton, AB

Whose idea was it anyway?

Was it really Abraham Kuyper who developed the idea of sphere sovereignty? David Koyzis and many others appear to think so. However, here with some assistance from Google, is a slightly different take on the origins of our hallowed reformational principle.

Luigi Taparelli D'Azeglio, S.J., (1793 – 1862) who promoted the revival of scholasticism at the College of Rome in the 1820's, may well be able to lay a belated claim to having developed this uniquely reformed concept. By the way, apparently Luigi also had a student at the College who was later to become Leo XIII. In any case, here's how Thomas C. Behr, Assistant Professor of History at the University of Houston characterized Luigi's idea.

"A society thus composed of minor societies is designated as an "associazionna

ipottattica," an expression that is meant to clarify that the minor societies are not subordinate to the larger society insofar as their own ends are concerned and tends to demystify the notion of the State as a monolithic ideal association of isolated individuals." Further on, Behr suggest Luigi held the view that "Every association within the social hierarchy has its proper ends, its own authority (relative to the concrete conditions of social formation), its own principles of action, and therefore its own being and rights. This social support is a right, that is, the right to association, precisely because it is a human necessity, both for the animal survival of individuals and for the cultivation of human perfection."

So, if Julie Andrews read Kuyper, did Kuyper read Luigi Taparelli D'Azeglio?

Jake Kuiken
Calgary

Civil unions – Christian?

In his Jan. 10, 2005 article Gerald Vandezande proposes civil unions as an alternative to same-sex marriage. It's an interesting alternative, but is it a Christian one? Mr. Vandezande is a well-known Christian, and this article appears in a Christian periodical, but nowhere in the piece is Scripture ever referenced, either directly or implicitly. He calls his proposal "neutral," "impartial," "inclusive," and "consistent with the principles of the Charter" but that only means that the world may end up liking it. What I want to know is, should Christians like it?

Christians for the most part still recognize that Scripture views homosexual acts as sinful and I haven't heard Mr. Vandezande argue differently. So why is he proposing a marital alternative that would involve the government giving an official stamp of approval to homosexual relationships? Is it not

their job to discourage evil?

I can see only two alternatives in the same-sex marriage debate and Mr. Vandezande's proposal doesn't fit either: if homosexuality is a-okay then the only reason to oppose same-sex marriage seems to be because one is bigoted, but if homosexuality is indeed sinful then same-sex marriage and alternatives to it that would encourage homosexual relationships, should clearly be banned.

Some will argue that Mr. Vandezande's civil union proposal is the lesser of two evils – it's at least better than giving homosexuals the word "Marriage." To that I would suggest that Christians are called to be a light unto the world, and to do that we must shine forth with the Truth, not simply lesser evil.

Jon Dykstra
Edmonton, AB



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Story

Crowning the King — a love story

Harry der Nederlanden

"Count them again," said Miss Thornstocking, glaring at the heap of valentines cluttering her desk. "And check the handwriting."

She meant business. No shenanigans got past her eagle eye, not in her classroom.

Our heartbeats quickened with hope. When she got that look in her eye it often meant someone was in for a strapping. Drama. Excitement. Oh boy!

The first count had been done on the honor system. Each of us had counted his or her own valentines and then Miss Thornstocking (her real name has been suppressed deep into the dark abyss of my unconscious mind) intoned, "Who got more than five?" As we raised our hands, we all craned around to see which pitiful creatures didn't. They weren't hard to spot, they were the ones not looking around and trying hard to stuff their heads into the inkpot hole in the top of their desks.

The inkpots themselves were long gone. Now we all wrote with that new invention, often cursed by Miss Thornstocking — the ballpoint pen. The old ink pens were much neater, she never tired of telling us, and the handwriting of her generation vastly superior to ours. If the ballpoint pen smudged, as it often did, we'd have to write the entire page all over from beginning to end. That's why I had so many dark stains on my jeans. I was a clever boy: every so often I wiped my ballpoint pen on my pants so the ink gob that formed on the end wouldn't end up on my paper.

Gathering up the mass of valentines in two hands, she said, "Malvalina, you come up here and hand them to me — one at a time."

No, Malvalina wasn't her real name. I think it was actually Valentina, but if I used that name, you'd think I made it up and that I was writing an allegory. This is not an allegory. This is a true story about how bad things were before teachers learned psychology and enlightened politicians banned the torture of children in schools.

Malvalina flounced to the front of the class, making her long pipe girls bounce. In the old stories, she would have been described as having 'raven tresses' but in our story she has shoulder length black hair that the other girls would have died for. Malvalina smiled sweetly at

Miss Thornstocking and then glared at Jackie, already standing at the front of the glass. He smiled and blushed. In fact, he'd been grinning like an idiot non-stop for the last 15 minutes. I found myself grinning back just as foolishly.

The valentines in question were Jackie's. When the countdown went on — "Who has more than 20 valentines? ... 30? ... 40?" — and more and more hands came down, at last — incredibly, astonishingly, suspiciously — only Jackie's hand remained aloft, triumphantly aloft. His eyes were like hubcaps — Buick hubcaps — as he looked from side to side, just as astonished as the rest of us. Henry and I snickered as Robert and James, the two runners-up, stared at him in open-mouthed disbelief.

Robert hissed just loud enough for teacher to hear: "*He sent them to himself.*"

Unlike Jackie, Robert and James always came to school with their hair combed, their clothes neatly ironed and in good repair, and without crud on their faces. Jackie's red hair was like straw, it was uncombable, and he had so many freckles that he never bothered wiping the food off his face, it blended nicely with the freckles. Often his clothes were so wrinkled, at first they looked too small. Only after the wrinkles slowly worked themselves out and his clothes took on the form of his body did they begin to fit. So it was understandable that he wasn't all that eager to change his shirt or jeans very often. It took three or four days just to break them in.

Jackie never once lost his big, beaming grin as Malvalina studied the back of each card and announced the count: "... 65 ... 66 ... 67..."

She stopped, and grabbing one she had already counted, thrust two under Miss Grandgrind's nose. "These both look the same."

Miss Thornstocking held them up close to her glasses to examine the handwriting.

Henry spoke up even before his hand was up. "Those are both from me. I sent him two."

Miss Thornstocking slammed the valentines on the desk and fixed an accusing stare on Henry. "You do not speak, young man, until after I call your name. Is that understood!"

"No, Ma'am.... I mean, yes, Ma'am."

That was Henry. He always started out by saying No and then quickly corrected himself when he saw Miss Thornstocking's eyes flash. His self-corrections didn't make much difference, though, he was still her favorite choice when she needed someone to whale on with her favorite strap. And then, watch out, once she was warmed up and snorting like a horse, others were sure to follow. The way she was eyeing Henry was not good.

"69!" snarled Malvalina. That was one more than her own count. She speared Jackie with a malevolent glance, which he returned with a beaming smile innocent as the moon.

Malvalina was the official counter in the classroom and taker-down of names. Whenever Miss Thornstocking had to step out of the room, all she had to say was, "Malvalina!" and Malvalina would take out the black Book of Doom to write down the name of any of us unruly types that dared to twitch or sneeze or whisper.

Jackie almost always ended up in the Book of Doom because he was always borrowing something from someone. "Can I borrow your ruler? Can I borrow your scissors? Can I borrow a pencil? Can I borrow your eraser?" The latter more often than any other. He was forever erasing. I think Jackie wore out more of my eraser than I did myself, and mine wasn't the only one he borrowed.

Malvalina's eraser, however, looked as new as the first day of class. She never needed to erase anything, and she never allowed anyone else to borrow her Pink Pearl eraser, certainly not Jackie. Not because he didn't try. Many is the time I saw him fix a hungry look on her virgin eraser, placed neatly on her desktop beside her newly sharpened pencil and her non-blotting, retractable ballpoint pen.

To be one of Miss Thornstocking's monitors, you had to be a girl with a name of three or more syllables. Griet, the girl behind me, was never called on to do anything, and neither was Cass. Cass was a head taller than any of the boys in the class and just as broad in the shoulders, so when Miss. Thornstocking was punishing the boys, sometimes Cass got included by mistake. I think it was also because her name sounded so much like a boy's name.



Ever since Miss Thornstocking's grade, I've been convinced that my name, Harry, has been a great impediment to my rise in social rank. It may mean "noble," but Miss Thornstocking often spat out the phrase: "...every Tom, Dick and Harry." So Harry came to stand for what is most common and contemptible. Harry meant "as common as dirt."

Moreover, there were three Harrys in Thornstocking's class, which meant that she hardly ever called on me to answer a question, which in turn meant I never got a chance to shine. Whenever Miss Thornstocking barked, "Harry!" three of us would shoot up out of our seats and tumble into the aisles. All the clatter would cause her to roll her eyes heavenward and let her arms go limp. In fact, sometimes four of us would come crashing out of our desks, for Henry often reacted to the wrong name. I think he was the only one of us who had actually been baptized "Harry." The rest of us were immigrants with unacceptable names who had been rechristened Harry — as in "every Tom, Dick and Harry."

Miss Thornstocking was now studying one of the valentines I had sent to Jackie — one of five. Books of paper valentines to cut out and color were cheap at Army & Navy's and my sisters had plenty, so I swiped a few of theirs and sent several to Jackie and Henry — and Gloria. (The only ones I bothered coloring were the ones I sent to Gloria.) As Thornstocking turned over the card again, I held my breath, for the thought passed through my mind

that she might decide to eliminate duplicates. Like everyone else, she had expected to see Robert or James crowned alongside Malvalina as the King of Valentine's Day, one of the highest honors attainable in Grade 5.

Whenever Thornstocking wasn't looking, Henry and I made funny faces at Jackie, who suddenly chuckled out loud.

"And what is it that you find so humorous, young man!" demanded Miss Thornstocking, rising from her chair like a cobra out of its basket. Henry and I exchanged glances of alarm. When she ended a sentence with "young man" in that tone of voice, you knew that no matter how you answered the question, the answer would be wrong, a violation of some secret protocol of the elders.

But Henry was quick. Raising his hand and standing up beside his seat as we had been taught, he spoke up: "Miss Thornstocking, the bell is going to ring pretty soon and we still have to crown the King and Queen of Valentine's Day and hand out the treats and sing that stupid song...."

Miss Thornstocking rose to her full height and beyond, her head nearly touching the ceiling — and this was in an old school with 12-foot ceilings — rigid with rage, she slowly raised her left arm — the Arm of Doom — and pointed to the door.

I cleared my throat and Thornstocking's eyes flickered in my direction. Griet punched my shoulder so hard I almost yelled out loud. A suspenseful silence settled on the room. Conscious of Henry standing in the aisle beside me, I kept my eyes fixed on my desktop.

Story/Opinion

Sitting across the aisle from Henry was dangerous. I had suffered collateral damage before. Only two weeks earlier, Miss Thornstocking had once again been expounding on the history of the kings and queens of England (and of the British Empire "on which the sun never sets"). When she mentioned that she could trace her ancestry back to the time of Henry VIII, our Henry had piped up, "Who to? To the executioner?" And he'd made a chopping motion to his neck.

The whole class had hooted with laughter, but Henry had ended up out in the hall, as Thornstocking carefully selected the most effective strap to address this attack on her family honor. As she started for the door, she looked over the class once more, outraged that we'd dared to laugh at such an insult to her noble lineage. That's when she spotted me still shaking with suppressed laughter. The laughter was quickly expelled from me like the life is expelled from a mouse stomped by an elephant, a really mad elephant with a really, really heavy foot.

I ended up in the hall with Henry. "Since you think it's so funny, you can share Henry's punishment," she said.

But she wasn't being truthful. She didn't divide Henry's punishment in half and give us each half. That would have been fair. No, when it came to dealing out justice, Miss Thornstocking's mathematics underwent a sea-change. My laughter, representing as it did that of the class, multiplied her wrath seven-fold. That meant each of us got three-and-a-half times as many strappings as Henry would have received by himself.

There's more than math involved. There's also physics. I got my lashes second, so you'd think there would be a diminishment in severity as she expended her wrath and energy. No such thing. Thornstocking's wrath fed on itself, growing in intensity as she whaled on you. The last lashes were delivered with more force than the first. When she sent a whole group of us out into the hall, we fought to get to the head of the line.

And when she was finished, her blood was up. She'd stalk back into the classroom looking for more victims. More often than not, she found them.

This time, however, after Henry had marched out the door, closing it gently behind him, Miss Thornstocking shook herself and

returned to the matter at hand – the crowning of the King and Queen of Valentine's Day. She looked down at Malvalina, who returned a pleading look. The Valentine's Day festivities had been described yesterday: the King and Queen of Valentine's Day would be crowned in front of the class, and then, holding hands, they would promenade around the room while the class sung the stupid song Thornstocking had taught us for the occasion.

Miss Thornstocking may sound like a toughie, but she was really a romantic. In a lilting voice she would tell passionate stories about young lovers, her eyes focused on some faraway nobler world, her hands gesturing gracefully as if she were doing ballet. Inevitably, in the end, one or both of the lovers ended up dead. And she would sniff and heave a deep sigh – as Henry slid down in his seat clutching his throat, his tongue hanging out and his head lolling to the side. Fortunately, Thornstocking never caught him because her eyes were fixed on some place elevated and far in the distance beyond the muddy roads of our town.

As Miss Thornstocking studied Jackie, however, her romantic impulses were not at all aroused. Jackie grinned and wiped his nose with his sleeve. Thornstocking gingerly placed one crown on Malvalina's glossy black curls. Malvalina did not lift her gaze and did not smile, but kept her eyes fixed on a spot on the floor just in front of the first row of desks.

Turning back to her desk, Miss Thornstocking picked up the second crown and the bag of red candies. Handing Jackie his crown, she also held out the bag of candies to him. "Here, you may pass these out to the class."

Tucking the bag between his knees, Jackie triumphantly planted the crown on his own head, as we broke out into applause. When he thrust out his chest and then, pretending to mount his royal steed, galloped around the room clicking his tongue, we all burst into cheers and whistles – all of us, that is, except Malvalina, who scurried to her seat. I started stamping my feet on the floor and banging my hands on my desk, and everyone joined in. Instead of handing out the candies, Jackie galloped around the room scattering them by the handful. There was a wild scramble. The candies were hot. They burnt your tongue like hot coals.

Marriage matters to Canadian mosaic

This article appeared in *The Calgary Herald* and was therefore addressed to non-Christians as well as Christians. We reprint it here not just because of its content but also as a model of how to address issues a Christian in a way that speaks to a broader public square.

Rev. Reinders argues that it is the secularist approach that imposes uniformity and destroys diversity, while biblical wisdom sustains greater diversity and freedom.

Phil Reinders

Do you think a few words from the Bible might help Canada's dilemma on redefining marriage?

OK, after you're done wiping up the coffee you've just spewed out in incredulity, let me again suggest a sentence from the Bible just might provide help to a divided nation.

Contrary to much opinion (and sadly, too much practice) the Bible is no tome of bossy imperatives or strident dictates to be used as a moral hammer. It is a source of abiding wisdom that invites us away from the shrill voices of vested interests, to a place of sane reflection.

Here are the sage words that may help, the nugget that says: "Everything is permissible, but not everything is beneficial."

The wisdom in these words is the understanding that the exercise of freedom is not the only consideration; it is the starting line. We are then free to think and explore and imagine, free to reflect and be responsible, free to consider what is good and beneficial, better and best. The exercise of freedom is the beginning, then, of an act of discernment.

The Supreme Court of Canada has ruled that it is legally possible and permissible to redefine marriage in order to accommodate same-sex partnerships. News reports rushed to speak of the redefinition of marriage as a fait accompli. This ruling does not entail automatic necessity, however.

The Supreme Court has issued the first national word, not the last, creating the space for a country wide discernment exercise that can, and must, occur. And in the discussion leading up to an anticipated Parliamentary vote, shouldn't the question now become, "Is the redefinition of marriage beneficial to Canadian society?" Isn't now the time to sift and weigh what is best and beneficial for building a good Canadian society?

For instance, what long-term impact is there to redefining marriage as a couple-centred reality versus its long history as a child-centred institution? What benefit does redefining marriage provide to homosexual minorities? And, how sustainable is a bill that requires explicit protective mea-

sures for certain segments of society from the very thing it introduces?

I'll leave those discussions for others; let's consider something more basic, more Canadian: Is the very act of redefinition beneficial?

A pluralistic society depends on a sharpened capacity to make distinctions and respect uniqueness. Recognizing differences requires definitions, explanations which preserve the beauty or essence of the thing you seek to respect.

How helpful, then, is it to play with our definitions? Are we tampering with our ability to make the distinctions and recognize the differences that create the pluralism we value in Canada?

So I'm wondering, doesn't the act of redefinition run against the grain of Canadian pluralism? In redefining marriage, surely we pursue a melting pot, forcing all distinctives into a pureed porridge.

I want to hang on to Canada's societal mosaic, piecing the uniqueness of diversity together into a good society for all. But the work of mosaic building depends on keeping the integrity of the pieces.

Marriage has been a basic unit in the construction of a good Canadian society. Despite its ragged edges (and mosaics are usually pieced together from fragments), it is a part of Canada's mosaic. Matrimony is just one form of relationship, but its current definition makes it a meaningful part of the Canadian mosaic.

Recent history has witnessed the emergence of another form of relationship, that of same-sex partnerships. While similar to some marriages, these partnerships are distinct.

So my question is, why aren't we maintaining marriage as we have known and understood it, and yet adding another piece to the mosaic, that of same-sex partnerships?

Instead of the unCanadian act of redefinition, can we follow a more home-grown, and beneficial, path of adding to the mosaic through the creation of a new institution?

I wonder why civil unions or registered domestic partnerships have been so quickly dismissed from this discussion. I'm more than a little disappointed that our government failed to imagine just alternatives that unite the pluralism of values and interpretations in our country instead of pursuing a single, and divisive, course of action?

Tough work? No doubt. Seeking what's best and beneficial requires difficult discernment and sharp distinctions. But following biblical wisdom is not usually comfortable, and no one promised making pluralism work for all Canadians would be a breeze.

Miss Thornstocking stood in front of the room, looking on immobilized, one hand to her mouth, as if one of the candies had burnt her tongue. We raised such a ruckus, the door suddenly opened, and the principal's head appeared, his eyes round with shock. Then Henry's head appeared too, his eyes taking it all in, till the principal put his hand in his face, shoved him back out and closed the door on the chaotic scene. A few seconds later, the bell rang.

I could end the story here, but the ceremonies were not yet finished. Rushing out the door for recess, whooping and shouting and leaping like jackrabbits, we trooped down the hill behind Jackie, who was still wearing his paper crown. We were headed to our domain – the woods at the far end of the playground.

Henry jostled up against me. "How many cards did you send

him?" he asked.

"Five. And you?"

"Six."

"You told the teacher two."

"No, I didn't. I said I sent the two she was holding. I sent four other ones too."

"More kids must have figured Jackie would hardly get any and sent him more than one."

"Or maybe everybody just likes him – like we do," said Henry.

See *Crowning the King* page 16...

Church

Muslim militants attack Christian community a month after state of emergency lifted.

Obed Minchakpu

JOS, Nigeria (Compass) – Fresh violence broke out in the central Nigerian state of Plateau when Muslim militants attacked the village of Gana-Ropp in the Barakin Ladi local government area, killing Christian community leader Davou Bulle and injuring his wife and son, who remain in critical condition at the Plateau state Specialist Hospital in Jos.

The attack came just weeks after the federal government lifted a six-month state of emergency imposed on the state between May and November 2004.

Mr. Bulle was killed on December 29 while he and his family members were returning home from their farm.

The attack threw the community, the site of Christian mission schools, into confusion and forced the Plateau state government to deploy four units of anti-riot police to the area. Police authorities in Plateau have announced the arrest of eight of the Muslim militants who carried out the attack.

Plateau state Police Commissioner Joseph Apapa told journalists in Jos that the eight Muslim

militants would be charged in court as soon as investigations are completed.

The same day, John Gobak, secretary to the state government, issued a press statement urging Christians in the state to remain calm. The state government has taken measures to ensure that the attacks are checked, he said.

"We are tired of the frequent killings of our people by Muslim militants," community spokesman Simon Mwandkwon told those at a press conference in Jos on January 3. "[That] is one of the reasons that led to the imposition of a state of emergency on the state last year."

Mwandkwon said the Muslim militants shot Bulle in the chest, killing him almost instantly.

The assault on Bulle is "a chilling reminder of the nightmarish experiences of the pre-state of emergency era," Mwandkwon said.

Three years of religious violence beginning in September 2001 resulted in the deaths of more than 10,000 people, the majority of them Christians, in Plateau state.

In May 2004, Christian militias

carried out retaliatory attacks against Muslims in the Plateau town of Yelwa, killing over 300 people. President Olusegun Obasanjo then declared the state of emergency in response to pressure from Muslim leaders, who had given him a seven-day ultimatum to declare emergency rule in Plateau or face full-scale war with the Muslim community.

Prior to the lifting of the state of emergency in November, the Muslim Council of Ulama insisted that officials extend emergency rule and threatened to make the state ungovernable if the government did not heed their warning. Christians view the December 29 murder of Bulle as a fulfilment of the Muslim leaders' threat.

On December 6, the Rev. Yakubu Pam, chairman of the Plateau state chapter of the Christian Association of Nigeria, alerted the public to plans by Muslim militants to renew attacks on the Christian community of the state.

Two days after Pam raised the alarm, police authorities confirmed that they had uncovered plans by an armed group working in concert with local Muslim leaders to destabilize Plateau state. They claim to have arrested suspected members of the armed group.

Sources in Nigeria predict that if the Nigerian government fails to check the activities of Muslim militants, there will be an escalation of conflict between the adherents of the two major faiths in Nigeria.

France warned by Protestant body of 'secularist' zeal

Bernadette Sauvaget

Paris (ENI) – The main body representing Protestants in avowedly-secular France has warned of a climate of "secularist zeal" as the country marks the centenary this year of the separation of church and state.

At a meeting with French Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin, the president of the Protestant Federation of France, the Rev. Jean-Arnold de Clermont, said Protestant churches were facing a host of "administrative irritations."

These included being denied planning permission by local authorities, and the refusal of social security offices to subsidize young people taking part in holiday camps which included times of prayer, although the camps had already been approved by the Ministry of Youth and Sport.

In one town the authorities had refused to deliver tax certificates for donations and legacies to the local Lutheran church. Another difficulty had been the cancellation, by three major insurance companies, of coverage for Protestant religious associations because the insurance companies asserted they would not cover "risks due to religion."

"I felt the prime minister showed a real willingness to listen and was concerned that Protestantism should not feel discriminated against," de Clermont told Ecumenical News International after meeting Raffarin.

About 2 per cent of France's 60 million people are estimated to be Protestants, compared to 80 per cent who

are nominally Roman Catholic, 1 per cent Jewish, and between 5 and 10 per cent Muslim.

The Protestant federation said that Protestants had "already been victims of collateral damage because of fears about Islam and sects" and said a new debate about religion within the governing UMP party threatened to make them victims again.

Prominent politicians have, in the face of the problems posed by new religious movements, and the greater public visibility of Islam in recent years strongly restated France's secular principles which were enshrined in the 1905 law separating church and state.

Citing its secular principles, France last year introduced a ban on school students wearing conspicuous religious symbols in state schools. The ban followed a heated debate on how the country should deal with female Muslim students who wear Islamic veils or headscarves.

But the debate on religion has re-ignited with the publication of a new book on religion by Nicolas Sarkozy, a former interior minister, who is widely seen as a contender in the presidential election in two years time.

Sarkozy heads President Jacques Chirac's UMP party and calls in his book for the scrapping of the section of the 1905 law that prevents the state from subsidizing religions. The idea has been rejected both by Chirac and by Raffarin.

African churches not winning the war on AIDS

Fredrick Nzwill

Nairobi (ENI) – Leaders of churches in sub-Saharan Africa, the region of the world worst-affected by the AIDS epidemic, say they appear to be failing in their endeavours to get across the message about the disease to their people.

"We don't seem to be winning the war," said the Rev. Mvume Dandala, general secretary of the All Africa Conference of Churches in Nairobi.

UNAIDS, the United Nations' programme on HIV/AIDS, estimates that while sub-Saharan Africa has just over 10 per cent of the world's population, it is home to two-thirds of all people living with HIV.

Ignorance in this region of Africa about the disease is contributing to its spread, Dandala told African church leaders gathered in the Kenyan capital from 17 to 19 January. He noted that some churches are preaching AIDS does not exist, and others are saying that those diagnosed with it can be healed by prayers.

"Such people are disempowering our people, who should know AIDS is real, is hurting us and has therefore to be fought and defeated," said Dandala. "We have to mobilise the African church into the realisation that the disease has a capacity to annihilate all of us."

The church leaders noted that key government programs aimed at rolling back the pandemic are now using churches as channels for treatment and care, but they expressed anxiety about the future of the programs, which are mainly donor funded.

"We should wake-up or we are gone," the Rev. Malebogo Mothibi of the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa told ENI. "We should think of alternatives in case the funds dry up."

UNAIDS said estimates showed a steady increase in recent years in the number of people living with HIV in sub-Saharan Africa, even though the prevalence was roughly stable.

Still, the agency noted, stabilisation did not necessarily mean the epidemic was slowing, as the number of AIDS deaths has also been increasing.

Apathy marks British approach to religion, survey finds

Cedric Pulford

London (ENI) – A dramatic fall in religious belief over a generation has emerged from a major survey in Britain, with less than half of respondents expressing belief in God compared with more than three-quarters in 1968.

"The national mood appears to be one of benign indifference," noted Anthony King, a professor at Essex University, and the polling specialist of the *Daily Telegraph* newspaper, which published the poll.

"Most people give the impression of regarding religion almost as a consumer good, one to be consumed by those who happen to have a taste for it," King wrote in the newspaper after the survey found 44 per cent of respondents expressed a belief in God com-

pared with 77 per cent in 1968.

For a minority, however, hell is feared as much as before: 23 per cent believed in it – the same proportion as a generation earlier.

The most common view about being married in a place of worship rather than in a secular venue, expressed by 40 per cent, was not to mind one way or the other.

However, support for Queen Elizabeth II to remain as head of the (Anglican) Church of England was supported by 48 per cent of members of non-Christian faiths and by 41 per cent of non-believers.

The survey also showed that most believers are not frequent churchgoers. Anglicans are the least likely to go to church in most weeks (12 per cent) although they represent almost half of the country's believers. For

Roman Catholics the figure was 23 per cent.

The keenest attendees were non-Anglican Protestants. With 26 per cent going to church in most weeks, this was seen as reflecting a rise of new evangelical churches.

The survey found that only 14 per cent of members of non-Christian faith groups attended places of worship in most weeks, and 56 per cent of these respondents said they never attended except for weddings and funerals.

The 2001 national census in Britain found a much higher proportion expressing religious belief. In response to a voluntary question, 72 per cent described themselves as Christian.

Church

New book tackles tough questions about the Kingdom of Christ

Jeff Robinson

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP) — Is the Kingdom of Christ a present or future reality? Is it spiritual or material? Is it the church or the world? Is it to be found in evangelizing the lost or in reclaiming the culture?

Christians for centuries have debated the answers to these questions and a new book by Russell D. Moore provides an in-depth look at the consensus that has quietly developed within evangelicalism over the past century or so regarding the Kingdom of God.

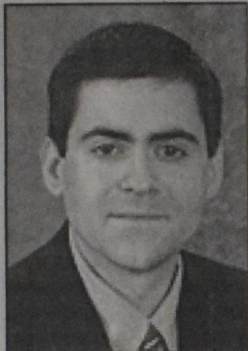
In *The Kingdom of Christ: The New Evangelical Perspective* (Crossway Books), Moore — who serves as dean of the school of theology and senior vice president for academic administration at Southern Baptist Theology Seminary — examines these questions through the prism of evangelical political action.

"But that is not because the Kingdom is a tool to equip evangelicals for politics," Moore writes. "It is not even because evangelical politics is all that important, in the greater scheme of things. Instead, it is because the failure of evangelical politics points us to something far more important that underlies it — the failure of evangelical theology."

The failure is that of contemporary evangelical theology to engage politics. Moore calls on evangelical Christians to shape their identity by convictions about the Kingdom of God in Christ.

"The new perspective on the Kingdom of God can define evangelical theology along the lines of the central themes of the Old and New Testament canon," Moore writes. "In the end, a renewed focus on the Kingdom is essential if evangelicals are ever going to grapple with the evangel of a crucified, resurrected, and enthroned Messiah.

"As such, evangelicalism ought to become both more and less political. Evangelical theology will not serve an activist agenda to be an identity caucus in someone's political party. But evangelical theology will remind Christians that the call to Christ is not a call to 'go to



Russell D. Moore

heaven when you die,' but instead a call to be 'joint heirs' with the Messiah who will inherit an all-encompassing Kingdom."

The book is broken down into four chapters and a conclusion. The chapters deal with evangelical theology and evangelical engagement, the Kingdom as 'already and not yet,' salvation as holistic and Christological, and the church as a kingdom community.

In an interview for Crossway's monthly newsletter announcing the book's publication, Moore said evangelical beliefs on the Kingdom have tended toward two opposite extremes. His book seeks to draw a more integrated and biblical picture of the Kingdom of God.

"Evangelical theologies of the Kingdom have led to two polar opposite approaches to political engagement: withdrawal or triumphalism," Moore said.

"One side persistently calls on evangelicals to withdraw from the public square and prepare for the coming of Christ. It beckons evangelicals to an alternative universe of evangelical subculture — a 'Bizarro America' where evangelicals have our own distinctly Christian popular culture, complete with Christian boy bands, Christian cartoon television networks, and Christian romance novels.

"On the other hand, some evangelicals have spoken as though America could be 'claimed' for Christ through enacting 'Christian' political legislation — complete with a 'Christian' view on everything from congressional term limits to the line item veto. These evangelicals have often vested political processes with so much hope that they are befuddled when political victories fail to stem the tide of the sexual revolution or the abortion culture."

A Kingdom theology, Moore says, must inform the social and political engagement of Christians as well as their view of the world's future.

"Both evangelical withdrawal and evangelical triumphalism must be measured against a biblical vision of the Kingdom of God — a

Atlantic Monthly highlights moral divide in faith communities

Dwayne Hastings

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — There is a growing divide in the faith community, and it is not necessarily between faith traditions. It often cuts right through them, contends Richard Land, president of the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, in an article titled "Beyond Belief" in the January-February 2005 issue of *The Atlantic Monthly*.

Author Hanna Rosin writes that Land gave the "kind of interview a quarterback gives in the locker room" after a big win, in which the team's leader seeks to deflect the credit for the victory to his offensive line, his receivers, and so on.

While saying the white evangelical vote was the "driving engine" of Bush's re-election victory, Land noted Americans of many different faiths who hold to traditional moral values provided the margin for Bush to prevail over his challenger, Democratic Sen. John Kerry.

"You'd be shocked," Land told the magazine, "at the number of Catholics who voted for this president. You'd be shocked at the number of Orthodox Jews, even observant Jews. This was a victory for all people of traditional moral values."

It's not happenstance that Land cites "moral values" and adds the descriptor "traditional." He knows there is a significant portion of the American population who take religion very seriously. And those who believe in traditional cultural and conservative religious values believe right and wrong exist and that there is a good and an evil, Land has said before.

It is this shared affinity for these "traditional moral values" that brought Americans from very different religious backgrounds

Kingdom the New Testament tells us is both "already" and "not yet," present and yet future," Moore said.

"The Kingdom informs us about what our priorities should be — personally, socially, and politically, and also tempers our expectations about what kind of change we can see, and where we can expect to see it. Accordingly, an evangelical Kingdom theology ought to reorient the way we think about both the church business meeting and the Iowa caucuses."

together in support of one political candidate over another, he said. This shared perspective also brings citizens from disparate traditions to the same side on several social issues, most notably abortion and homosexuality, Land argues.

When it comes to values, says Land, he has more in common with many in the Catholic faith than he does with Jimmy Carter or Bill Clinton, two men who are also Baptists. Stressing that he has deep theological differences with the Roman Catholic faith, he explains there are common causes on which people of different faith traditions can agree and work together.

The real religious divide isn't between the church and the unchurched, the article declares, but between two groups of people who believe — they simply believe differently when it comes to many moral issues. Land points out that polling data from the 2004 presidential contest reveals significant distinctions between voters' who are members of the same denomination.

"There's a fault line running through American religions. And that fault line is running not between denominations but through them," Land said. The disagreements are so fundamental that it is now rare for a mainline denomination to hold an annual meeting and not have some sign of the division in members' positions on moral or social issues in the news the next day.

Yet it is not only mainline denominations that are undergoing a transformation; evangelicals are not a monolith either.

A study by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life found that half the evangelicals surveyed in 2004 called themselves "centrist" or "modernist," the magazine reported. A segment within these non-traditional groups has been called "freestyle evangelicals." These individuals are typically morally conservative but moderate in their politics, placing greater primacy on environmental and education issues than is normally the case with evangelicals, particularly those tabbed as "traditionalists" who are eager to preserve "traditional beliefs and practices."

The Atlantic Monthly article contends the "divide between traditionalists and modernists [both

evangelical] is likely to widen in the coming years." But religious traditionalists from many different faith traditions appear to be "gelling into a united force," despite their theological differences.

Political operatives in the Bush White House saw the "emerging religious split" and took advantage of it, says the article. During his first four years in office, Bush reached out to faith groups not known for supporting a Republican candidate and enjoyed increased support from the groups' members on Election Day 2004.

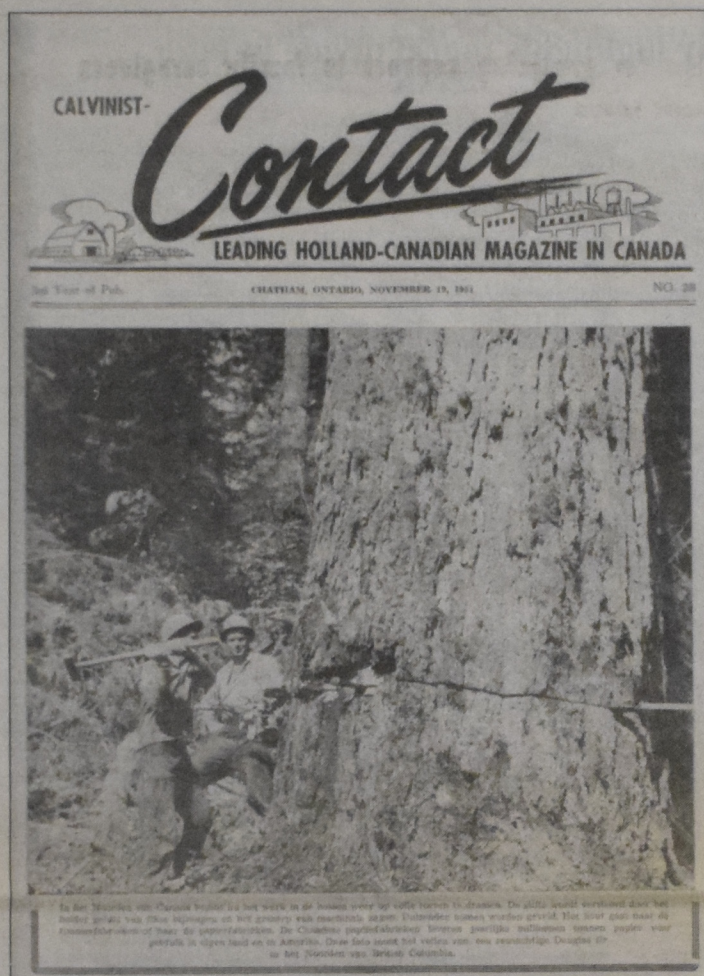
The article references efforts by Archbishop Charles Chaput of Denver to encourage Catholics to address the abortion issue at the ballot box. "We've tried one approach for thirty years — to be against abortion but measured and contextualized, but it hasn't rooted out abortion," Chaput told Rosin. The archbishop was one of several Catholic officials who took issue with presidential candidate John Kerry, Catholic and pro-choice, taking communion.

In an article on his diocese Web site, Chaput faulted Catholics who take communion while "they ignore or deny the teachings of His Church," including the Church's position on abortion. In an Oct. 18, 2000, column, Chaput wrote, "Many American Catholics no longer connect their political choices with their religious faith in any consistent way."

But what does the future hold? While conservatives of all religious stripes appear to be better mobilized than other interest groups, suggests *The Atlantic* article, the "burden of high expectations" may be their undoing. If President Bush doesn't hold tight to his promised agenda, the voters who embrace "traditional moral values" may drop out of the political process by 2008.

"It's not hard to imagine that perhaps six months, or a year, or three years down the road, religious traditionalists will face frustration and a sense of betrayal by the political system, with which they are now engaging so enthusiastically," the article contends. This is a fact borne out by history, it suggests, citing the late 1980s disappearance of the "Moral Majority" when its proponents found it overly difficult to effect social change primarily through Washington, D.C.

60th Anniversary



From the archives

The first minister of the first CRC in Canada (Monarch), *The Canadian Calvinist* of January, 1950 tells us, was Rev. G.G. Haan, who also (according to an earlier issue of *CC*) served in Winnipeg as early as 1898. He was called at a salary of \$1,000 per year plus 2 horses, 1 cow and free pasture. We are not told whether it was a milk cow and whether the pastor had to be taught how to milk it. In 1947 services were still divided equally between Dutch and English.

The Dutch immigrants that settled in Neerlandia, starting in 1912, paid \$10 for 160 acres, according to the *CC* of July 1947. They moved north from Edmonton, where they had settled for two years, because they were looking for a large parcel of land which they could homestead side by side. Initially there were no roads, railroads or doctor to the area. The new settlers formed a church in 1915 and built a log meeting house, but they did not call a minister until 1929. In the interim, the Neerlandians were served periodically by pastors like T. Jongbloed, who traveled over muddy trails to the distant outpost with a team of oxen, swatting mosquitoes all the way.

The same issue of *CC* reports on the first meeting of the Immigration Committee formed in 1946. It met in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Some delegates had to travel 2,500 miles (4,000 km) to attend. Because of these distances (which took far longer to travel at that time), all CRCs were urged to form their own local immigration societies.

Wrote J. Vellinga, one of the members of the committee: "When immigration really starts, say in '48 and '49, our committee is of the opinion ... that our different congregations can only absorb a small percentage, and we must already now look for new fields suitable for future Reformed immigrants.... Three new fields were mentioned at our last meeting - the Clay Belt in Northern Ontario, Peace River District in Alberta, and Central British Columbia.... How will we be able to obtain reliable and trustworthy information about new fields?"

The committee expressed reservations about the information provided by the railroads and the provincial governments, so it asked the help of local groups and societies: "Our committee will ask the group or local society nearest to any field to personally inspect such

we included an excerpt from his description of a logging camp. In the August 1950 issue of *Contact*, he again reported on the group of immigrants that settled north of Cochrane, Ontario. One of the women of their group, wrote Hamstra, expressed her delight that three different ministers, Rev. Vander Meer of Holland Marsh and two ministers from the Chicago each devoted two weeks of their vacations to lead them in two services every Sunday during the summer. Located some 500 miles

Go north, Dutchie!

a field...."

So the committee enlisted and mobilized CRC folk across Canada in the settlement effort. To cover the costs, the committee planned to raise \$25,000 in churches in the U.S. and Canada.

CC also issued a warning that war brides might fall under the influence of the Roman Catholic Church, and it pointed out that those joining the Catholic Church would have to sign a statement declaring that it is the only true church and all others are heretical sects.

Protestant pastors in Quebec, *CC* reported, were protesting the fact that they were required to pay income tax while Catholic priests were exempt. Not fair!

The first year of *Contact*, based in Ontario, carried regular detailed reports by P. Hamstra of immigrant life in northern Ontario. In the last issue

(800 km) from the nearest CRC, she had begun to feel as if they were forgotten. Although the Cochrane group were not yet formally organized as a church, they already had their eyes on a piece of land in Clute where they might build a church near the United Church.

In the October 1950 *Contact* Hamstra reported on the group's progress after a full year of hard work in the north. It has been a cold, wet summer with a late spring. An early frost in mid-August has brought crop failure. Most of the vegetable crop is lost and the potatoes froze before they could develop any size. It couldn't get much worse. "We'd have been better off leaving the land and finding work elsewhere," he admits.

But then he counts their blessings. There is a shortage of workers in the area, so one can always find work on some farm or in the bush as a logger. The land is ideal for beef cattle with lots of grass and hay. More and more land is being cleared. In a few more years, they'll have to travel much further north to get work as a logger.

"Although most of us have had to do with less, some of us have managed to get ahead," he writes. Several have acquired one or two cows.

"We must not forget our courageous women," he says, "for it was they who - besides God - helped get us through these hard times. Although they were accustomed to a very different life, they courageously pushed on and inspired their men to endure and bravely go forward.

"We know that the Bible says that a good wife is worth more than rubies. The wise woman

builds her house; the foolish one tears hers down with her hands. Well, I think our group has been richly blessed in our women. Do they never complain? Sure, they too have their hard times, but they don't allow themselves to lose heart. They bring a sacrifice of love to gladly build their house for themselves and their children.

"It is well known that a woman has a great ability to adapt, and that has become clear here. She has been a good help beside her husband and a mother to her children, and she gives herself to that task with all her heart as only a woman can. History repeats itself. Whenever times become rough and hard for a people, it is the loving devotion and sacrifice of the women that has made the impossible possible."

Hamstra surmises that when they read what he has written about them, the women will probably give him dirty looks, but he says he's willing to take the risk. A brave man, that Hamstra.

The *CC* of Sept. 1949 carries the news - in two places - that during the past summer Tymen Hofman preached in his home church:

"In the church news from the Nobelford congregation it is reported that a son of their church, the seminarian Tymen Hofman, occupied their pulpit recently. Such must have been gratifying to the mother church. It is also good news to the Canadian churches in general. It is increasingly felt that these churches should produce their own preachers and teachers. ... Hofman is the seminarian who promises to be the first fruits in the ministry. We are happy about it."

The same issue of *CC* lists a number of others pursuing higher education from various congregations in the west - a proud demonstration that among the Holland-Canadians, as the writer puts it, "there is progressive interest in higher education, which promises well for the future."

On the same page, Edmonton announces that it has started a grade school in the basement of its church and includes a small photograph. It's not very clear, but perhaps some early Edmon-tonians can puzzle out some of the faces. Two years later my face would have been among them, at least for a few months.



Senior Care

Many issues of both *The Canadian Calvinist* and *Contact*, besides describing the new country and passing along news about how other immigrants are faring, also give brief reports about conditions in "the old country" after the war. Here's an excerpt from July 1947 CC, originally published in English in the *Christian Labor Herald*:

"Economic conditions in Holland are bad, especially from the viewpoint of what we enjoy in America. Wages are far too low. The cost of living is far too high. Prices of food and other necessities are four or five times as high as in America, and wages are lower....

"Everything is strictly controlled in Holland. Wages are frozen for the time being. Only adjustments in case of gross inequities or injustices are allowed. Meanwhile the government is looking for ways to lower prices. The labor organizations are cooperating. They fear inflation even more than the present distressing conditions....

"Union leaders appeal to their members to exercise restraint, patience, to be saving, to use every penny earned in the most profitable way. Employers are appealed to to run their businesses with as little overhead as possible, to keep costs down, to be satisfied with a smaller profit and salary. Middlemen, the retailers, are urged to sell with as little a margin of profit as possible. Everyone must help the nation!....

"The Christian labor organizations are leading the fight for victory over seemingly insurmountable difficulties. They know that if they do not succeed, the only alternative will be a Socialist state, which will eventually be submersed in Communism. That would be the end of all Christian social action in Holland."

For those like me who have been complaining about the level of schooling nowadays as compared to those entering university 50 years ago, here's a bit from the CC of November 1949:

"Ninety percent of entering freshmen ... cannot take the course in mathematics that was considered standard 20 years ago.

Two-thirds of the freshmen course in English composition is now of high school level."

[I wonder what such comparisons were like in the 1920s. Did that generation too fail to measure up to those at the beginning of the century?]

Contact regularly carried long articles singing the praises and selling the virtues of different areas of Canada. Here's some information culled from a piece, translated into Dutch, entitled: "The North is not inhospitable" (CC, Dec. 3, 1951).

"All my life I've met people who believe that the farther north you go the colder it gets," begins the writer, named only as a Canadian explorer-traveler. In his travels to the Arctic Ocean, however, he discovered that it wasn't as cold there as in some areas of the American mid-west. People think of the north as a "frozen wilderness." Not so. Despite the fact that a large part of the Northwest Territories are called "barren grounds," nothing could be further from the truth. It gives the impression that the area is unfit for human habitation, and therefore no one gets it into his head to settle there and develop the land.

"Yet, the territory between Hudson Bay and the Mackenzie River is far from barren. There are endless vistas overgrown with plant life of all kinds. The average Canadian would think he was looking at the waving prairies of Saskatchewan and Alberta. He adds in parenthesis that the growing season, however, is too short for grain to ripen. Nevertheless, the land would make excellent pasturage."

He describes seeing vast herds of cariboo of some million animals – fat, healthy creatures sustained by the pasturage of these so-called barrens. "Their meat is delicious, indistinguishable from the best beef. And their hides make top-notch clothing."

He adds that although he himself never tried milking any of the cariboo, he was told that their milk contains a higher level of butter fat than the milk from the best dairy farm.

Consider these tips for providing support to family caregivers

Your caring can help prevent burnout

Lisa M. Petsche

In approximately one-quarter of Canadian households, care is provided to one or more people aged 50-plus. In most cases, no formal support services are in place, meaning that all care is provided by family members and friends.

These unpaid helpers provide practical assistance and enhance the quality of life for ill older people who might otherwise require placement in a long-term care facility.

Typically, they are spouses or offspring; many are seniors themselves. The loved ones they care for have physical or mental impairment (perhaps both) caused by one or more chronic health conditions, stroke and dementia being most common.

The caregiving role involves physical, psychological, emotional and financial demands. It can be a heavy load, exacerbated by the limited availability of community support services. It can also be one of life's most rewarding experiences.

The caregiving journey is often a long one, though, and particularly challenging when the elder has heavy hands-on needs, a demanding personality or mental impairment. A common phenomenon is caregiver burnout, due to the physical toll and emotional strain over time.

Following are some things that you, as a friend or relative, can do to help prevent a caregiver you know from wearing down.

☞ Keep in touch, recognizing that you may have to make most of the effort in maintaining the relationship. If you live at a distance or otherwise can't visit often, call to see how he or she (the latter will be used from here on) is doing or send a card or letter to let her know you're thinking of her. Do this regularly, even if the caregiver doesn't reciprocate.

☞ Educate yourself about the care recipient's disease, to help you understand the kinds of challenges the caregiver might be faced with.

☞ Listen non-judgmentally, demonstrate compassion and don't give unsolicited advice. Provide words of support and encouragement.

☞ Offer to accompany her to a caregiver support group meeting (some offer concurrent care). Talking with other caregivers who have a first-hand understanding of her situation can be very therapeutic. Support groups provide an opportunity

to vent frustrations, express concerns, brainstorm solutions and share successes.

☞ Encourage the caregiver to practise self-care by eating nutritiously, exercising and getting sufficient rest in order to maintain good health. Do whatever you can to help make this happen. For example, bring over a meal, or offer to sit with her loved one while she goes out for a walk or takes a nap to catch up on lost sleep.

☞ Ask what kind of practical help she could use most; perhaps it's picking up groceries, running errands, or doing laundry or yard work. If she initially declines assistance, continue to express your desire to help. Meanwhile, take it upon yourself to deliver a casserole or muffins or, if you're a neighbor, to shovel her walk when you do your own. Encourage her to ask relatives or friends for help if she's trying to do it all single-handedly.

☞ Surprise the caregiver with a treat, such as a rented movie, a magazine, fresh flowers or a plant, or a gift certificate to a restaurant that has takeout and delivery service.

☞ When it comes to special occasions, keep in mind that the most valuable gift you can give a caregiver is the gift of time. Offer to sit with the care recipient for an hour while she goes to a hair appointment or to a church service, or for a longer stretch so she can go on a day trip or to a cultural or social event. (Time away from caregiving allows caregivers an opportunity to recharge their batteries.) If you don't live close by and can't offer respite, find out if there is any special equipment the person could use to help make caregiving easier – for example, a bath bench. For bigger-ticket gift items, investigate whether family members and friends would be willing to pool resources.

☞ If the caregiver is planning to host a party or dinner, offer to help with preparations or clean-up, or to attend to her loved one during the event so she can concentrate on hosting duties and mingle with guests.

☞ Offer to gather information about community support services – such as accessible transportation, home care, day programs and residential respite care – if none are in place, and encourage their use as appropriate.

Lisa M. Petsche is a social worker and freelance writer specializing in family life and eldercare issues.

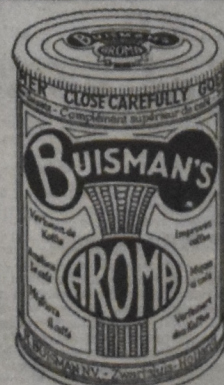
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Outreach

Meet the teacher + hockey + church plants = ???

Ron DeBoer

The first year, first grade teacher smiles at us as we enter portable three-or "P-3" as the first graders call it. It is a modern-day version of the one-room school-house. Five little islands of desks float on the trampled brown carpet; forgotten snow pants and indoor running shoes hang from the hooks in the back; the capital and small letters of the alphabet are printed in perfect form across the top of the chalkboard where the names of special helpers are listed in pink chalk; the walls are covered with maps, French math words, punctuation posters and student drawings of happy faces. Above the teacher's neatly organized desk is a sign that says, "The Queen of this is Kingdom is...Ms. Sudds."

Ms. Sudds thinks it would be really neat if we experienced life as a first grader instead of the traditional chat about how our six year-old is doing in school. She plunks us on little orange chairs in the Story Corner and reads us a Robert Munsch book about the dangers of conformity, frowning at my Nike running shoes. Then she drops red construction paper in front of us and instructs us to draw a picture of our families so she can scotch tape them beneath our children's drawings of their families.

So here I am -- a dull ache in my right buttock, a broken yellow crayon pinched between my fingers -- glancing up at the other parents' pictures to see if I'm drawing mine correctly. While we draw, Ms. Sudds stands behind us with her hands linked behind her back, whispering encouragingly, "I really like the color of your sun, Ron," or "I'm curious as to why you put little horns on your children's heads?"

When I show her my picture, she purses her lips and says, "Drawing isn't as easy as it looks, is it, Ron?"

Karen, meanwhile, has been busy drawing a three-dimensional house with a landscape that blends different colors. Her family members contain details like pony-tails, shirt-collars and dimples.

"It's not difficult to see where Tara gets her artistic talent, is it?" Ms. Sudds says to us, adjusting the pencil in the bun on her head.

To get a picture of Ms. Sudds just think Laura Ingalls Wilder from *Little House on the Prairie*, except add about twelve gold bracelets that hang loose on each wrist.

"Now, it's time to do some math," Ms. Sudds announces. "You may go to the board, Ron, and subtract four from eleven."

When I write "seven" on the board, Ms. Sudds shakes her head disappointedly and says, "You must write '11 - 4 = 7.' Equals. In university engineering classes, you may not simply write the answer. You must show your work."

Tara is the fourth of four DeBoer girls navigating her way through first grade at Franklin Public School. She has requested this parent teacher interview. Tara is concerned about getting into university. Yesterday, Tara sat us down in the living room and listed her concerns: "She won't let us ask questions during tests because in university you aren't allowed asking questions during exams. She says quizzes are never re-written in university. She says the classes in university are so big, the teacher doesn't even recognize his students when he meets up with them at the grocery store. She says if we don't put a bibliography on our book reports, we will fail for plagiarism. She says plagiarism is stealing people's thoughts. I can't even spell plagiarism. And how do you steal someone's thoughts?"

We explained to Tara that Ms. Sudds is a recent graduate from university, that this is her first year of teaching, and that she is still getting used to grade ones.

"Who cares about PLAYgism?" Tara says. We just want to PLAY."

Back in the classroom, I am wedged into Tara's desk. "Elbows off the desk, please," says Ms. Sudds, smiling. "That's something I always try to impress on the children.

Honestly, the manners they come to school with! Nobody's going to teach them this stuff when they get to university where they're expected -- expected! -- to get out their notebooks and take notes the moment the professor walks into the room."

I put up my hand.

"If you're asking for a washroom pass or a water fountain visit, you'll have to wait until the end of the lesson. That's a rule we try to enforce in P-3. You can't just walk out of the lecture hall in university...."

"Can I ask you a question?" I ask.

"You may ask a question even though you just did ask a question," says Ms. Sudds, raising her eyebrows. "But you may ask another."

I clear my throat nervously.

"Tara is a little concerned about all this talk about university --"

"Tara should not at all be concerned. I believe she is university material," says Ms. Sudds.

"We think so, too, ma'am," I say. "But do you really think it's necessary to reference 'university' to a bunch of first graders? They've just figuring out how to tie their shoes, for pete's sake. Tara cares more about learning how to whistle than how to take notes during a lecture."

"We aim a little higher in P-3," sniffs Ms. Sudds.

"And we appreciate that," interrupts Karen, knitting her eyebrows at me. "We think you're doing a fabulous job. Tara's just worried about university; we don't want her to perceive university as a big bad place."

"Big bad place! My university years were the best years of my life," exclaims Ms. Sudds with a flourish of her arms and bracelets. "Whatever gave her that idea?"

We told her about Tara's concerns. "I just think since they're in grade one, they should only have to worry about grade one, not what goes on at university," I went on. "How in the world can they plagiarize if they can't even write a sentence?"

"I see," says Ms. Sudds, icily. "I will speak with Tara tomorrow. Our time together has sadly come to an end. Good day."

In the parking lot, I breathe a sigh of relief. "Thank goodness that's over. I was afraid she was going to give me the strap."

"You didn't exactly give off a great family impression," Karen says. "She's probably going to keep Tara in for recess for the sins of her father."

"I just think you need to teach first graders where they're at -- not where they might be in twelve years."

While the notion of a first grade teacher who believes she must teach children as if they are in university seems outlandish, consider the scenarios playing out each Sunday in many Christian Reformed Churches. A "first grade" Christian new to the faith or perhaps not sure about her faith comes to worship in a traditional Christian Reformed Church.

She sits in the pew, notes the formal attire and reverent tone in the church. She doesn't understand all the words. Other members sitting in the pews seem to anticipate what's coming -- everyone takes peppermint rolls out during the Bible reading; people are looking up songs during the minister's opening welcome; everyone recites creeds from



memory. While the friend who invited her to come to the service said "first grade Christians" were welcome, the classroom seems to resemble a university lecture hall where everyone knows what they are doing. The message is about something called "postmillennialism" and the minister uses big words and old testament Bible verses everyone else seems to know because many of them don't even open their Bibles.

Does the Christian Reformed Church really meet the needs of "first grade Christians?" Do "first grade" Christians ever come to your church? When's the last time you invited a "new" or "not yet" Christian to your church? Is yours the type of church you would invite a new Christian?

Let's frame the concept of outreach with a hockey context. Your task is to find adult hockey players who have never played the game before. Sort of a hockey outreach or evangelistic initiative, if you will. How would you begin?

First of all, you'd ask people at work or in your social circles if they'd ever heard about hockey. In all likelihood, they'd say yes. They will have seen arenas -- places of worship for hockey players -- all over town, but for one reason or another, they didn't feel the need to go in and play the game. Next, you'd probably tell them how much you love hockey. They'd already know this, of course, because they will have heard you talking about hockey and will have seen how excited you are about the game. You will have demonstrated your passion by spouting statistics; you'd be able to name players from the glory years of the forties and the last twenty Stanley cup winners; you'd know last night's junior hockey scores because you watch the highlights every night -- like devotions before bed.

People begin to feed off your excitement. If hockey brings this much joy to your life, they want some of it. So they agree to come to the arena on Sunday afternoon where you've rented the ice for an hour. When they get there, they don't even know how to put on their skates. You show them. They don't know how to skate, shoot the puck or what those blue lines signify.

You're not concerned. There are lots of regular players in the dressing room, you reason. The new hockey players will catch on when they get out on the ice. You tell each player his position, you start shouting terms like "back check" and "get to the net for a rebound." The organ plays songs that everyone in the stands seems to know by heart.

But the new hockey players are puzzled and a bit intimidated. They're still holding onto the boards to stay upright and you're expecting them to take a slap shot! Everyone else seems to know what they are doing, so the new players try to be as invisible as possible. They endure the hour, smile and thank you for the invitation as they leave the dressing room. You never see them again.

Like the first grade teacher preparing her six year-olds for university, not only have you not met the needs of the hockey player you've invited to play, but you've probably turned him off playing hockey for good.

But this scenario, in fact, plays out in the "university classrooms" and "NHL rinks" of many of our present day Christian Reformed Churches in Canada. We find people who are interested in hearing more about the wonderful

Stewardship

Intentional giving: firstfruits

news of Christ – “first grade Christians” so to speak – we invite them to church, and we hope for a sort of “micro-wave” miracle to occur when we sit them in a pew.

Although the traditional description of the CRC is what many of us grew up with, many new Christian Reformed church plants are opening to meet the needs of those “new” and “not yet” Christians at various stages on their spiritual journey. Church plants across Canada and the U.S. are breaking the mold of the traditional church to reach those in our communities who are looking for less traditional, less formal, less structured, less intimidating, and more relevant styles of getting one step closer to Jesus Christ.

Kitchener-Waterloo's *The Journey* is just such a church. In October, *The Journey* (www.myjourney.ca) opened its doors for the first time. An off-shoot from the stem of Community Christian Reformed Church in Kitchener, *The Journey* meets in a high school gym. The core members of the group – numbering about 40 – have been brought together from various churches with the purpose of creating a church where guests can get “one step closer to God” in their spiritual journey. The idea is that the core members become more deliberately involved in their communities and develop deep relationships within public schools, community groups, and parenting networks on sports teams with the deliberate purpose of inviting friends to a worship service designed specifically for them and their children.

The church breaks away from the mentality of traditional Christian Reformed Churches, many of which have members whose children sit in Sunday school classrooms with the very same peers as their Christian schools, whose social circles are only other CRC people and whose weekly activities are centred exclusively in church and Christian school contexts. While these churches meet the needs of “members,” they often assume a “level” of Christianity where “new” Christians or “not yet” Christians do not fit in.

The Journey, and other church plants like it – such as Forest City Community Church in London, Ontario and The Tapestry in Richmond, British Columbia – is a place where members from diverse cultures and backgrounds can drink coffee, wear jeans (and feel okay about it!), and be ministered to through the culturally plain language of video, drama and contemporary music. It is a place where parents can bring their children to Kid's Kingdom for interactive, down-to-earth Bible lessons led by small group leaders who are aware of the spiritually and culturally diverse children in their groups. The worship services and messages are designed to reach the hearts of those Christians in different places in their spiritual journey with special emphasis that there is no “standard” or “arrival point” to which these new Christians must aspire before they are considered part of the community of the church. *The Journey* is, quite simply, a place where all Christians on the spiritual continuum can take one step closer to God.

Home Missions (www.crhm.org), the outreach branch of the Christian Reformed Church that supports the planning and funding of new church plants, has boldly mandated that twenty such church plants will be started each year in Canada and the United States. For more information on how to start a church plant or how you can contribute to church plants in North America, visit Home Missions' electronic magazine entitled NewChurchNew (www.newchurchnet.com).

While university classrooms will never accept first graders and the NHL will never allow beginner hockey players, the sole purpose of a church plant is to make disciples of all men and women no matter where they are on the spiritual continuum.

I have no need of a bull from your stall or of goats from your pens, for every animal of the forest is mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills. Psalm 50:9, 10

Our God is an abundant God – if you don't believe that then your God is not much of a god or he is very small! God does not need us to give as if it were some return on his investment on us. A kind of ‘kickback’ for him blessing us, i.e., God provides timely rain for the crops or gives us success with a new product line or a promotion. Or for some, giving is a matter of duty much like paying taxes. But that is not the kind of giving that God is looking for.

Instead, giving is meant to be an heart driven act. It is at its best when gratitude, compassion and love drive it. It is to be our first priority – a ‘first fruit’ – number one on our spending list!

When the Israelites were on the way to the Promised Land, God established an orderly way for his people to express their love for him. He set up one tribe, the Levites, and put them in charge of the service of the tabernacle (later the temple) and instructed the other tribes to provide for them and the cost to run the tabernacle from their income. At this time God instituted the tithe as the guideline for giving and he made a promise to bless his people if they were faithful. Was it a tax? Some may have felt that way but others gave willingly, blessing the Lord with their tithes.

Perhaps the key factor is motive. What drives your giving? Is it need? Is it duty or obligation? Is it what you're expected to do? Or is it a willing or grateful heart – a heart that gives deliberately in order to participate in ministry?

The apostle Paul instructs the people at Corinth to be intentional about their giving. We read this in 2 Cor. 9:7 where he writes:

“Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”

It may be helpful to recognize at least two broad categories for our giving:

1. **Planned giving:** regular, programmed giving to well established on-going programs i.e., our church, long-term missions and development work. Just as the Israelites provided for the temple service, today we provide for the work of our church and denomination by our regular planned giving. The needs for our church's ministries are well-documented and planned (budgeted) and therefore we need to be intentional about our participation by the giving of our time, talents and money. At minimum, we should carefully consider at least once a year what we intend to do and commit to set aside for the next year, with God's help, for the work of our church (on a weekly/monthly basis). We need to plan this as a *first fruit* – that is it is the first thing we set aside or the first cheque we write each time we get paid. Our giving is to be planned into our personal budget so it doesn't get side-railed or forgotten. In executing our plan this is where Pre-Authorized Remittances (also known as Direct Withdrawals) can help.

2. **Urgent giving:** crisis and compassion driven, i.e., disaster (Asia earthquake and Tsunami), local tragedy, special campaigns/drives. As the Asia crisis unfolds, people worldwide are responding, giving resources to help. Our hearts go out to the survivors and victims of this tragedy. We need to be willing to give up that extra coat or whatever it takes to enable us to respond in love. Most of this giving is extra-

ordinary – it is not part of a plan or budget.

In view of these two kinds of giving, it is important to recognize that we need to do both. However, what seems to happen in many instances is that we get into the habit of doing only one kind of giving: the crisis kind. For instance, in the fall of the year, we often hear of a treasurer or someone else making an appeal because of a shortfall in revenue for the church budget. Clearly it is evidence that some do not practice regular weekly or monthly giving in a planned way to provide for the work of the church. It is a practice of leftover giving – not first fruits!

To be a faithful steward in giving the best guideline is the biblical one. Use the biblical teaching of the tithe as a guideline for your support of Kingdom causes. Your church should be number one. Think of the tithe as a starting guideline for your giving. If you are not there, make a plan to get there by incrementally increasing your giving by 10% or more per year. Tithing is based on blessing and helps keep your giving in step with your income.

But don't stop there. Once your home is paid off and kids are on their own, your giving can continue to grow beyond the tithe. I personally know people who are ‘double-tithers’ and they have shared with me how abundantly blessed they are!

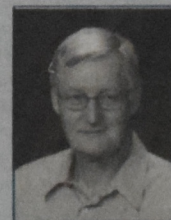
Stewardly Tip: 4 “R’s” Exercise To help you get into the habit of Intentional First fruits giving, consider doing this exercise:

1. Review your giving in the last year – look at the data.
2. Reflect on what's happened in your life in the past year. Through the changes recognize God's faithfulness to you.
3. Re-commit your time, talents and resources to the work of the kingdom. Sit down with your spouse and pray about this and then commit what you intend to do in the next year for the ministry of your church, denomination and other Kingdom work.
4. Write it down and make it a weekly or monthly ‘first fruit’. The act of writing it down helps you be more disciplined to actually do it the next year. If you have a ‘prayer partner’ with whom you can confide (other than your spouse) – allow yourself to be accountable to him or her.

Readers: Share your ‘Stewardly Tips’ so that we all can make better use of the resources God has entrusted to us. Submit your suggestion and your contact information so that we can acknowledge your contribution or ask for more details.

Next issue: Importance of Wills–Part 1

Rick DeGraaf works for Christian Stewardship Services in Markham, Ontario
Rick's email: rickd@cssservices.ca



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Biblical wisdom

Is the real the pleasurable?

I said in my heart. Come now, I will prove thee with mirth; therefore enjoy pleasure; and behold, this also was vanity. (KJV)

I thought in my heart, "Come now, I will test you with pleasure to find out what is good." But that also proved to be meaningless (NIV). Ecclesiastes 2:1

A.A. Van Ruler

The aim of the whole book of Ecclesiastes is to find out what is the essential and abiding content of human life, and why living it is worth the trouble. To this end, he describes certain experiments (as we might call them).

Life is woven with many threads. It reveals many aspects. We could take each thread separately and explore it and test it persistently and exhaustively. Any of these elements of existence might, perhaps, contain the truth and meaning of existence. To this experiment the Preacher devotes the rest of his book.

In a more or less systematic manner, he takes each possibility under consideration. He surveys all of life, pausing awhile at every possibility to drop his sounding line. Will it discover ground anywhere? Does human existence have a ground that forms its foundation, that makes it intelligible, meaningful, fruitful?

The first experiment which the author performs has to do with joy. Could it, perhaps, make up the real stuff of life? This is a typically Hebrew question. In the framework of biblical thought this question arises quite naturally. Joy plays a prominent role in the Bible, both in the eyes of God and man.

The way the Bible speaks of God, we can more truly say of God that he is joy than that he is love. God acts in history and on the earth so that the children of men, even the full-grown and mature, may be joyful before his face. The Bible says this again and again in the Old Testament as well as the New.

So it is easy to see why the Preacher makes the object of his first experiment joy. He thinks: If I drop my sounding line into the waters of joy, perhaps then I will find the firm ground that supports existence.

This, too, he does in a typically Hebrew way. To his mind, joy is not a purely abstract and inner

thing. To his mind joy is something that we can experience only in concrete reality. He has in mind here, namely, earthly goods: drinking wine, building houses, planting vineyards, plotting gardens and parks, having slaves, herds and flocks, silver and gold, singers (both men and women) and everything that the human heart desires — yes, all possible pleasures.

This is, then, joy in the possession and enjoyment of the things that we can possess.

We must not denigrate this joy. I too am sometimes struck by the thought that an enormous part of life's fulfillment is bound up in such things. To acquire lots of earthly goods demands great effort and to then enjoy them is one of life's greatest arts. Both the effort and the art of enjoyment can keep a person breathlessly busy all his life. He is then pursuing things. He has no time at all to experience the emptiness and meaninglessness of life.

He is like a child! Children too are endlessly fascinated by the things of the world; they lose themselves in them and are happy. We usually call such a way of life purely materialistic, and we look down our noses at it. But by doing so we may easily overlook a very essential dimension of life.

In any case, the Preacher was not so highly spiritual that he looked down his nose at it. He took this possibility — having and enjoying the things of this world — completely serious. In fact, he gives it first place. To him it seems to be the most prominent possibility in his search for an answer to the question, Why is life worth the trouble? Is it the joy we find in earthly goods?

Yet, here too he is unable to discover ground with his sounding line. He says: "This also is vanity and a striving after wind. Also in joy there was nothing to be gained under the sun; I said of laughter,



Jan Steen, jolly feast

"It is mad," and of pleasure, "What use is it?" (2:1,2).

The remarkable thing is that he doesn't give the slightest support for this judgment. Why is there no substance, no ground or support in joy, that is, in the enjoyment of the goods of life? He does not tell us. Not a word! He considers it so obvious that he doesn't deem it necessary to enlighten us further. He has only to assert it; then everyone will immediately see that it is true — on the basis of his or her own awareness and experience of life. A big bash is a lot of fun, but afterward all that is left is a hangover. And then you are even hung over about joy itself.

Strange, but true: you can become very depressed about your joys. All pleasure carries with it a bitter taste, albeit an aftertaste.

This is also true on a bigger

scale. Many have led a life of purely materialistic accumulation of possessions from which they have derived real pleasure. But when they approach the end of their lives, they sometimes suffer a complete inner collapse. There is nothing left of all their delights except a deep melancholy.

To my mind, we should interpret the Preacher's explanation to read: "If we take things in themselves, then they are nothing." This belongs to the deepest nature of creatureliness. Creation is out of nothing. The innermost being of created things is, therefore, in a sense, nothingness. In all our enjoyment we ultimately taste this nothingness. This is what makes life so bitter and melancholy.

However, we must not take things in and by themselves. They are created things. We have to take

them in relation to the Creator, in relation to his will. They exist by reason of his free and boundless good pleasure. We must do the will of God, says I John 2:17. And the apostle adds, "He who does the will of God abides forever."

To do the will of God means, among other things, that we should enjoy the good things of this earth and rejoice in life. But it does not follow that the substance of life resides in these things, or in our delight and joy in them.

The substance, the ground, the support of life resides only in the will of God and in doing the will of God. It is God's good pleasure that must be mirrored and expressed in the pleasure that we take in everything, also in earthly goods.

Only then will we discover the meaning of our created existence.

Christian Living

Christian education: does it really make a difference?

Rod Berg

Over the Christmas holidays I had the wonderful opportunity of witnessing my 8 week old niece being baptized. Although I have witnessed many of these baptisms over the years, I listened a bit closer this time around. The minister actually asked my brother and sister-in-law, "Do you promise to do all in your power to instruct your child in the Christian faith?" I couldn't help but wonder if Christian Education was part of that "to do all in your power" phrase.

Over the holidays I also had the chance to talk to an old friend who attended the same Christian elementary school that I did. The conversation followed the familiar pattern of family, career and children. When I asked which school his children went to, I was a bit surprised to find out they did not attend a Christian school. When I asked him why he would not consider the local Christian school, his response was that it did not make much of a difference for him.

Why do we send our children to a Christian school and does it make a difference?

Responding in obedience

One of the best reasons for sending children to a Christian school has to do with parents responding in obedience. When my brother and sister-in-law responded, "We do, God helping us," when asked by the minister if they would do everything in their power to instruct my niece in the Christian faith, they were promising to do whatever they could to be obedient to God with this precious gift with which they were blessed. I kind of get the picture of us parents standing before God and him asking us if we gave our all for the Kingdom to lead our children toward the cross or if we held anything back. I really feel true obedience is responding with: "No Lord, we did not hold anything back".

Opening a door for the Holy Spirit

Whenever we place our children in an environment which invites the Holy Spirit to work, we are planting Kingdom seeds in them. Similar to church, Sunday school, Bible studies, mission trips and praying with our children, Christian day school helps students connect socially, science, language arts and discipline to God's world. Does it actually make a difference in their

lives?

When I am driving down a paved highway, I may not be able to feel if the contractor put the required 18 inches of gravel under the layer of pavement; however, over a few seasons of extreme cold and heat, time will tell if the pavement will buckle or not. Walking a life of faith is a long-term journey and the various foundations laid may not immediately be evident, however, they do play a part in the big picture.

Sacrificing for the Kingdom of God

Blessings always follow sacrifice, whether it is a change in diet to improve lifestyle, a regular exercise program to increase the quality of life or a savings plan for retirement, natural blessings flow out of making sacrifices. Christian Education is the same way. For some of our families the monthly payments are almost more than they can bear, and for others it is not that much of a challenge to have their children in a Christian school. Regardless of our financial picture, whenever we are required to give things up for the Kingdom I really believe blessings follow.

Does it really make a difference?

My midlife crisis started about five years ago when I participated in the 10 km Police Challenge Run in Abbotsford, BC. Taking up running seemed like a safe midlife crisis and was considerably less expensive than a white Mazda Miata or a little red Corvette, not to mention much more attainable.

I started running because I was up for a challenge but soon began reading about the many health advantages that came along with such an activity. Although the research states very clearly that a regular exercise program will significantly reduce the risk of a stroke, heart disease or diabetes, no Running Room or Footlocker store will give me a certificate guaranteeing a life free of health complications with a new pair of running shoes. If I were to ask for such a certificate I would be told there are too many other factors that come into play — family history and diet just to name a few.

Christian education is a lot like a regular exercise program. Although not the only factor in building a life in Christ it certainly can be a significant part of the foun-

Psalm 139's hidden message

When I was in Grade 5, a new student came to our class. I remember her well because she was not like any of the rest of the kids. She was different. Our teacher did the best he could to tell us that the new student was different, but we didn't listen well enough to be prepared for what was about to come.

I was hungry, did you feed me?

When the new student came, she was the talk of the school. She did things that we didn't do. She drooled. She spoke different. She was difficult to understand. She shook at times and had a very short, explosive temper. We couldn't understand why she couldn't tie her own shoes, after all this is grade five, you learn that stuff in kindergarten.

I was a stranger, did you invite me in?

While we played, she watched. If she joined in, we laughed. If she played at the back of the playground, we were at the front. When she ran we watched and laughed. We couldn't figure out why she was going to our school. We didn't think this was the place for her.

I was thirsty, did you give me something to drink?

Our school was not used to "these kind of people". What were we to do? We weren't prepared for this type of situation. I can specifically remember the insults that she walked into. The students called her "retarded", "stupid" and "dumb". She not only had to tread into a sea of unwelcoming kids, she was forced to deal with her schoolmates always asking her "What is wrong with you?"

I needed clothes, did you clothe me?

I was confused with my fellow peers' reaction to our new classmate. I was taught that there was not a class system when it came to ones physical and mental state. My parents were drawn to people that had special needs and thus our house was a well-used haven for anyone who entered. As we were a singing and performing family, we would often perform for a local agency that housed and supported people with intellectual disabilities. There were lots of people who drooled, shook and dis-

played tempers. The difference from this place and the schoolyard was clear. At this place there were no insults hurled, no verbal abuse, no one's dignity was cruelly attacked and above all nobody was asked, "What is wrong with you?"

Looking back, I now know who the "stupid", "dumb" and "retarded" were. It was us. I realize some of the students who were doing these things did them out of fear, lack of knowledge and ignorance however we, as a society need to do a better job at teaching not only ethnic diversity but also intellectual diversity. I must not have been much of a disciple in grade five because these verses still ring in my head today.

I was that girl in grade five, did you protect and defend my honor?

What needs to be taught is that people with special needs have nothing wrong with them. God was in charge when they were born and he is in charge of their lives now. To add to that point, the ability to tie your shoes is over-rated. Filing your own taxes and being able to drive a car that has a manual transmission is not much of a feat. Yes it is fairly convenient to be able to navigate a fax machine or whip up a gourmet meal but the things that really matter are none of these things. To be able to love one another as Christ loves us and to be able to boast in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ is something to be proud of.

There is a well-known verse in Psalm 139 that speaks louder than we are used to hearing. "All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be." The Psalm conveys that God knew us before we were born and that he made us "fearfully and wonderfully". More importantly, it tells us that if we wonder what might be wrong with someone, that in itself is wrong.

Mendelt D. Hoekstra is the founder and director of the Music Therapy program at Bethesda, an organization owned and operated by the Menno-nite Brethren Conference of Ontario, that supports adults with developmental possibilities. He lives in Vineland, ON with Marisa and their two children.

We welcome Mendelt Hoekstra, not as a replacement for Tim Antonides, but to carve out his own niche in CC. He will not write on sports but search out his own topics led by his own curiosity.

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My window seat

Mendelt Hoekstra



Rod Berg is the principal of Holland Marsh District Christian School in Newmarket, Ontario.

Pastors

SUSTAINING
Pastoral
EXCELLENCE

Rachel Boehm Van Harmelen

While many churches offer elaborate systems to secure pastoral care for church members, very few spend much time

thinking of "pastor care." Evidence of neglect in this area is the growing number of pastors in the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) – and other denominations – leaving parish ministry or changing careers entirely. Other signs of the lack of pastor care are growing stress levels among parish ministers, leading to physical and mental illnesses or marriage and family breakdowns.

A growing number of pastors, however, are taking active steps to find better ways to care for themselves and reduce their work-related stress – and many are looking to peer learning groups to do so. A recent conference in Grand Rapids, Michigan, drew CRC pastors who are leaders of peer learning groups, groups that receive funding from the CRC's Sustaining Pastoral Excellence (SPE) program. At the conference, pastors spent time sharing the impact that their peer learning groups have had on their personal lives and ministries. A clear consensus emerged from the day's discussions: peer learning groups fill important gaps in the lives of parish pastors, reducing stress and contributing to healthier ministries.

The need for lifelong learning

Pastors today know that education needs to continue long after they leave the seminary. Conference participants noted time and time again the need for ongoing opportunities to enhance their skills and education – either formally or informally. Peer learning groups help meet this need by enabling small groups of pastors to gather regularly to study books, share experiences, hone preaching skills or listen to guest speakers on various topics.

"Our group always has a book that we are reading," says Rev. Tom Bomhof, pastor of Fleetwood CRC in Surrey, B.C. "We get together and we discuss it, and it really motivates us and keeps us furthering our learning. We are always looking for conferences or sessions we can go to together."

Bomhof says it's not that he couldn't read the books on his own, but having the group gives him the push he needs to set aside the time to read and reflect. "With everything coming at you, you get the tyranny of the urgent," he says. "The group gives you the motivation to read the book. The group gives you accountability."

A pastor at Harderwyk Ministries in Holland, Michigan, Rev. Wayne Brouwer participates in a peer learning group geared to developing the leadership skills of senior pastors in large CRC congregations. "We

are nurtured as leaders in our peer group," says Brouwer. "Each of us has gained insights and resources from the books and sermon series we have shared. We have also been helped with staffing issues, and benefited from mentoring connections with others who have gone through some of the same challenges."

Brouwer feels strongly that peer groups play an important role in contributing to healthy pastors – and churches. "None of our ministries would be as strong or healthy as they are were it not for the insights we have brought together and then taken back to our individual ministry settings," he says.

The variety of ages and experiences represented in peer learning groups allow for natural opportunities for mentoring and resource sharing, says Bomhof. "What I really like is that it is a mixed group of ministers, the multigenerational aspect. One member of our group is in his sixties and he shares a lot of his insights."

"As peer learning groups we span the spectrum of age and pastoral experience," echoes Rev. Derek Van Dalen, who leads a peer learning group in the state of New York. "This helps each of us to be refreshed, encouraged and to grow in pastoral wisdom."

The groups provide a fresh perspective to one's personal journey of learning, says Rev. John Gerrits, pastor of Kelowna CRC in British Columbia. "The peer learning experience provides an invaluable layer to my own personal reflections," he says. "Sometimes the track of my own thinking and awareness is a pretty tight and closed loop. The other group members help me to see and think and understand in creative new directions that I would never have come up with on my own."

The need for work-life balance

Parish ministry is an all-encompassing career. The hours are erratic and the work involves many evening and weekend obligations. It takes extra effort for pastors to set aside "down time" that coincides with that of their spouses and children. Pastors who attended the peer learning group conference noted the need for congregations to encourage pastors to find a healthy balance between being effective in their ministry and being effective in their homes or personal lives.

Many pastors involved in peer learning groups say that their participation in the groups has helped them to set healthier boundaries between work and personal lives. In fact, a California-based peer learning group has focused directly on work-life balance, healthy spousal relationships and improved physical and emotional health for pastors. Inviting their spouse to attend a recent retreat and their regular meetings has added to their group's effectiveness. "We found it to be a real blessing," says group leader Rev. Larry Fryling. "We had the opportunity to hear the spouse's perspective

and found it to be helpful for both ministry and our marriage relationships."

Fryling says the group's focus has contributed greatly to pastoral health – and has positively contributed to each pastor's respective ministry. "Healthy pastors are always a plus to any church," he says. "Also, as healthy pastors we will be better equipped to know and answer God's plan for each one of us."

Even groups whose focus is not specifically related to work-life balance often spend a lot of time discussing this issue, says Gerrits. "It is one of our regular topics of discussion," he says. "Our families and our personal lives are central to our time and attention. We pray for each other, offer insight and suggestions, and share things that have worked for us. When any one of us is going through something and it is shared at our group meeting – that person usually receives some calls and e-mails in the following weeks, just to touch base."

The need to reduce a pastor's isolation

In their peer learning groups, leaders noted that isolation was a common theme. A pastor must be there for members of the church at all times, but who can the pastor turn to for counsel, fellowship and prayer support? In addition, many pastors at the conference admitted that they find it hard to develop friendships within their con-

gregation and often lack opportunities to seek out friendships elsewhere.

Pastors who participate in peer learning groups, however, say that the groups provide excellent opportunities to develop relationships with peers who share similar challenges and life experiences. Friendships and mutual support are a natural outcome of their meetings together. "Frankly, except for classis meetings and our peer group gatherings, we do not have much opportunity to interact," says Rev. Chris Lanham, who leads a peer learning group in Central Michigan. "The sense of community that has already risen in our group has been surprising and encouraging."

A sense of community

Church members who have been through difficult times of illness or crisis understand how important it is to experience the support of their pastor and other members of the congregation. Many are now learning that special effort needs to be taken to ensure that that same level of support is available to our pastors, too. "We teach our congregations about the importance of community. As pastors we need to have that, too," says Rev. Andy Sytsma, who – along with his colleagues in New Jersey – are discovering a new sense of Christian community through their peer learning group. Sytsma and his peers urge other pastors to start – or join – a group in their area.

Funding available

Peer learning groups in the CRC are eligible to receive funding from the Sustaining Pastoral Excellence (SPE) program, made possible by a grant from Lilly Endowment Inc. Twice yearly on May 1st and November 1st, SPE accepts proposals from pastors who wish to form a peer learning group and one-year grants are awarded on a limited basis.

To learn more about peer group learning and the type of funding that is available, please contact: Project Director Michael Bruinooge Project Coordinator Lis Van Harten Phone 877-279-9994 (toll-free) or email pastoralexcellence@crcna.org.

Crowning the King ...continued from page 6

Reaching the igloo we had built in front of the great tree, we quickly fashioned a throne out of snow on top of the igloo. As we prepared for a proper coronation, Griet came racing into the clearing carrying Malvalina's crown. "She threw it away!" Griet cried in outrage.

In no time at all, we had made another snow throne beside Jacky's, and we crowned Jacky and Griet the King and Queen of Valentine's Day. Any kids that ventured too near the woods, our woods, were pounced upon and dragged before the King and Queen to pay them homage – or have their faces washed. Sometimes both.

When I popped out of the bushes looking for more peasants to enlist in our great coronation celebration, I spotted Miss Thorn-stocking. She was standing up on the hill huddled close to the school out of the wind looking down at our domain, where no teacher ever set foot. She must have

been holding her breath, for suddenly a fog-plume flared from her mouth, enveloping her whole head.

Turning, I hurried back into the woods to tell Henry what I had seen. He read a great deal and often had surprising insights into the meaning of things.

But Henry and Jackie and Griet were laying for me, and when I burst into the clearing, they jumped me and washed my face till I almost choked.

What kind of king does that to one of his loyal supporters, I ask you?

Note: Some readers have complained about improper documentation for some of my stories. This one was partly drawn from the theories of Mikhail Bakhtin on the carnivalesque and from a medieval holiday in which a boy was crowned bishop and the hierarchy of society turned upside down. But actually it all actually happened exactly as I have told it here, names changed to protect the innocent and not-so-innocent.

Missions

To give and to receive

Vicky van Andel

This column is being written on a flight from Quito, the capital of Ecuador, to Houston. I am on my way home from a medical mission trip to Cuenca, a beautiful and historic city in southern Ecuador. The purpose of the mission was to provide orthopedic surgery and dentistry to poor people living in the Andes mountains.

Our medical team was made up of 40 people specialized in orthopedic surgery, nursing, physiotherapy and dentistry. The orthopedic surgeons performed hip and knee replacements on adults and operated on club feet and displaced hips of children. The nurses and physiotherapists provided postoperative care. The dentists traveled to rural schools and worked with poor children.

In the one week we spent in Ecuador the team was able to replace 30 hip and knee joints on adults, repair 16 clubfeet and dislocated hips on children, and provide a full range of dental care to 150 kids. All of it at no cost to the people of Ecuador.

The coordinating doctor from Cuenca is Manuel Avila. Manuel was born in a village high up in the mountains of Ecuador. His family was poor. He has never known his father, a reality that still brings tears to his eyes when he talks about it. Supported by many caring people in his life, Manuel was able to go to school, become a physician and even spend some time in the United States to study and to learn the English language. To Manuel, his accomplishments are a gift from God. Out of gratitude for the privileges he has received he has dedicated his life and work to bring healing to the poor people of his country.

For many years Manuel visited the people in the mountains on horseback. In payment for his services he accepted only what people could afford. Often this was a chicken or some other food product off the land. Two years ago he met a wealthy man who offered to buy him a four-wheel drive vehicle to navigate the rough mountainous roads. This simplified Manuel's life greatly. He proudly tells the story. The first thing he had to do was get a driver's license.

Manuel is very sincere Christian man. I recently overheard one of our team members ask him: "Manuel, who do you actually work for, who pays you?" Without hesitation Manuel answered: "I work for God," pointing his finger upwards.

"But God does not pay you pay your bills," the team member said.

"Oh yes, God does," answered Manuel unwaveringly. "God always pays my bills."



The poor people of Ecuador served by Manuel are for the most part the indigenous people living in the Andes mountain range. Many of them live in small isolated villages and earn their living by agriculture and handicrafts. The mountains are very high but they are well suited to agriculture all the way up to the top, unlike our Rocky Mountains, because the temperature stays mostly above freezing except occasionally during the night. The average daytime temperature reaches 25 degrees Celsius. Handicrafts are created by women from the wool from their sheep. The women weave wall hangings, scarves, ponchos and tablecloths, and knit sweaters and hats and anything that lends itself to knitting. They sell their products on the local markets.

Medical care is not easily accessible. Babies are often born in huts and for that reason dislocated hips are often not discovered at birth and club feet tend not to be corrected. That is why so many people in Ecuador have disabilities. Another speculation is that babies' hips become dislocated because of the way they are carried in shawls on the backs of women. Many people also suffer from severe arthritis due to the fluctuating temperatures in the mountains.

Tom Greidanus is the orthopedic surgeon from Edmonton who leads the Ecuador medical mission team. Tom and Manuel met nine years ago at a conference in Ecuador. It was there that Manuel received an urgent phone call about one of his patients. She had been in an accident and appeared to have a broken hip. Manuel asked if there was a surgeon in the group. Tom responded to his request, informing him that he was actually an orthopedic surgeon. Both Tom and Manuel then went to see the patient. It became clear that the woman needed a hip replacement. If not, she would be crippled for life.

"But we don't have hip joints here," Manuel said. "Artificial joints are virtually impossible to come by in Ecuador, and they are too expensive."

Tom decided to call Canada and asked one of his colleagues to send a hip joint to Ecuador. When it arrived he put it in.

Since that time, Tom feels called to go to Ecuador each January to perform surgeries on the poor and disabled people there. Each year he puts together a highly professional team. During the year each team member collects equipment and supplies that otherwise would be discarded. Some team members raise funds by way of presentations to service clubs and churches.

Nurses bring dressings and supplies, physiotherapists bring crutches and walkers collected from people who no longer need them, and dentists bring the tools of their trade in portable form. All supplies are carefully packed in large hockey bags. When it is time to travel, each person is given responsibility for two tightly packed bags. All personal items are limited to carry-on backpacks.

The surgeries on the adults are performed in a privately operated hospital in Cuenca. The hospital is getting quite used to the annual visits of the team. Each year the chief administrator is more accommodating and supportive of the work of the team. Manuel Avila negotiates the use of operating rooms and a nursing care unit for one week. Sometimes there are two operating rooms available. The auditorium is made available for storage of supplies.

During the year Manuel lines up the people who need surgery. On the first day of work about a hundred patients are waiting at the hospital to be seen by Dr. Tom, as he is known. All of them have some kind of disability; some walk with a cane, others with crutches and still others can't walk at all and are carried by family members. Most people are in pain. Each person is usually accompanied by at least one family member expanding the waiting crowd to several hundred people.

The patients are pre-assessed by nurses and then seen by the physicians. Of the one hundred people who have come, thirty or forty are prioritized to have surgery according to several criteria: the degree of their disability, the amount of pain they have, their age, and the effect of the disability on the income of the family. Those not chosen for surgery are given some follow-up care. They receive pain medication, or are fitted with a brace or they are taught how to best manage their disability. These people then go home and wait for surgery next year. One man who received surgery this year waited four years. Manuel follows all the

patients up during the year.

Maria was a special patient this year because she received two new knees. She was carried in by her children because she couldn't walk. When I first met Maria I was reminded of the man lowered from the rooftop by his friends to be healed by Jesus. Surgery is seldom done on both knees at the same time but Maria responded well to it. I cared for her on the unit afterwards. She did well. Immediately upon waking up from the anaesthetic she put on her traditional felt hat and wore it in bed the whole time.

The surgeries on children are performed by a pediatric team of doctors and nurses. They did their work in a nearby hospital for space reasons. Their job is hard because children are afraid and they cry. The new toy brought along by the team members doesn't always make up for it.

The two dentists and their assistants visited several schools in the outlying areas of the city. The children are screened and prioritized according to the severity of their dental problems. The dentists avoid tooth extractions, focusing primarily on fillings, root canals and reconstructions. The incidence and severity of tooth decay in children in Ecuador is much greater than it is in Canada. Each child receives a toy to take home.

Who is enriched by the work of the team? The people who received the surgery and dental work are of course very blessed by it. They have a chance for a better life. Some can go back to work after years of suffering pain and disability. They easily express their gratitude to the team members and hug and kiss them. "You are angels from heaven," they say. Some even offer small gifts.

But I truly believe that the people who benefit most from mission work are the team members. By giving little of themselves they receive much. It is rewarding to care for people who otherwise wouldn't get that care. It is rewarding to receive their gratitude and love in return. It is enriching to be with courageous people and to witness their endurance and hope. It is also rewarding to make do with less for a while and to be creative about it. We made IV poles out of coat hangers dangling from ceilings and pillows out of anything we could find. Mission team members are as blessed as the people they set out to serve.

Through this experience I have a renewed perspective on my life. I see that the world is bigger than my own little corner in it. I know more clearly once again that God is present everywhere in the world and that Gods works through many different people.

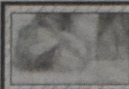
My plane has safely landed in Houston. I am looking forward to my flight to Edmonton and to coming home.

Vicky Van Andel is the editor of this column. Anyone who would like to contribute to this column is invited to contact her via fax at 1-780-473-0970, or e-mail at: vickyv@telus.net

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Opinion



Yes ... but

Bert Hielema

Rumsfeld's errors and Bush's freedom

I am a reading freak: magazines, books, newspapers: *New York Times*, the *Guardian*, *Mother Jones*, *Alternet*, *New York Review of Books*, on the web; *Foreign Policy*, *Time*, *Harper's*, *Economist*, the local *Intelligencer*, *Globe*, in hard copy. In my reading I look for the unusual item. After all, I want my column to be unusual. Not that I always succeed in that. But I try.

So, scanning – I don't really read everything thoroughly – a small item caught my attention a few days ago, in the *Baltimore Sun* of all places. It had received a curious memo, leaked to them by Lt General James R. Helmly, who is at the helm of the U.S. Army Reserve. The memorandum, addressed to the Chief of Staff, stated that the Army Reserve was in danger of becoming a "broken force."

Just imagine a Vice-President of Engineering of General Motors sending a memo to Head Office in Detroit with the message that their SUVs were lemons and unsafe at any speed, and leaking his opinion to the *Wall Street Journal*. Immediately the GM stock would tank. And the man fired, of course.

Well, this is something similar, but much more dangerous for the US, except that on the surface nothing happened to the biggest business in the world with millions of employees and a \$500 billion annual budget.

What's so broken about the USA Army? Here's what this three star general wrote to the top brass in the Pentagon: "The Army Reserve is unable to meet mission requirements associated with Iraq and Afghanistan, while simultaneously reset and regenerate its forces for follow-on and future missions." What applies to the Army Reserve also is true of the National Guard Units. In other words: the Iraqi fiasco is too much for the all-volunteer U.S. fighting force.

Quite a bold move for this general. I am sure he'll never get his fourth star. The surfacing of such a news item is not an accident. What this amounts to is a major revolt by senior Army commanders. The reason is the extreme stress suffered by the U.S. soldiers and officers.

The blame for this situation goes directly to one man: Donald Rumsfeld. Rumsfeld is the U.S.

secretary of Defense. He has strong views. That's the only trait he and I have in common. No, there is one more similarity: we both are stubborn old men, well into the seventies. But there the comparison ends, because those who like him, would not appreciate my views. And vice versa, too, of course.

When appointed by Bush and Cheney, Rumsfeld had one thing in mind: revolutionize the armed forces. Let modern technology do the jobs and eliminate manpower wherever possible: electronics and gadgetry could replace the foot soldier and eliminate flag-draped coffins. The current trouble was not the conflict he envisioned: an old-fashioned war emerged, something akin to Vietnam: primitive people versus high tech killer machines.

Urban warfare

Rumsfeld totally misjudged the occupation of Iraq, where lots of foot-slugging soldiers are needed, something General Eric Shinseki, the then commander of the army, had told him: "You need 500,000 men on the ground for the job." Rumsfeld fired him for disagreeing and publicly ridiculed him. Rumsfeld also did not foresee that an organized resistance movement was underway there. He and his neocon pals assumed that there would be a short occupation because democracy would spontaneously sprout. Instead urban warfare, waged under cruel conditions – guerrilla war in other words – requires lots of infantry and armored vehicles. Both sorely lacking.

So Rumsfeld made three radical errors: he overestimated the benefit of high-tech weaponry, he underestimated the challenges posed by the resistance fighters, and these two mistakes resulted into a third when he did not recognize that he had been wrong. Truly great men admit to their fallibility. Not Rumsfeld. Not Bush.

Back to this memo. In essence it is an open challenge by the American army generals to Rumsfeld, the ultimate top dog, the one with direct access to the president. If the commander of the Army Reserve says that his command is incapable of carrying out its mission and does so publicly, there is no way to cover it up. The terrible truth is that this general is

right. These same generals commissioned a study, conducted by the Institute for Defence Analyses, a military thinktank, which detailed a grim picture at odds with the Bush administration's rosy scenarios.

Not only has Rumsfeld suppressed the report, but the Pentagon has yet to acknowledge its existence. So we have another war: open conflict at the Pentagon. It's no longer just the army against Iraq. It's also top career soldiers against Rumsfeld.

On January 20 George W. Bush officially started his second term with a 50 million dollar bash. President Bush clings to good news and happy talk, such as the number of school openings in Iraq. People with gloomy assessments are not permitted to appear before him because the president forbids discussions based on worst-case scenarios. Military strategists and officers are systematically ignored. Bush – like Rumsfeld – makes his decisions from a self-imposed bunker, where ideological fantasies substitute for reality. How long can Bush dodge the draft issue?

Empire and freedom

I read Bush's inaugural speech (where Freedom was mentioned 27 times without defining it) for clues about the future role of Rumsfeld. Well, folks, he'll stay as Secretary of Defense, so let me resume my Rumsfeld ruminations and tell you about the company he keeps. He is part of a troika, together with Cheney and Wolfowitz: three buddies of old, from Father Bush's time.

More than 12 years ago Paul Wolfowitz, then working at the Pentagon, listed Iraq as the high priority target. When Al Qaeda emerged, Iraq was publicly linked to this terrorist group, even though Richard Clarke, then Director of Counter intelligence, when asked by Bush, denied any connection.

Then, as now, the troika's real aim is imperialism, is having America rule the waves and wave the rules as long as it is good for American business and secures the oil stream for many years to come. No question: America is powerful. It's so powerful that it can blow off the map all the cities of the world in one gigantic operation, bomb Beijing, shatter Shanghai, nuke North Korea, torpedo

Tehran, all in one flash, and supposedly expunge the Axis of Evil.

Not true, of course, because the real Evil Axis cannot be eradicated because it runs through all of us. Our Big Lie is that we deceive ourselves in acting as if economic growth can continue forever and that our lifestyle can be extended to everyone world-wide. Is that the freedom Bush proclaims?

Years ago I was at a conference at the University of Guelph. There the chairman of the (now defunct) Club of Rome said that, in the past century, we have magnified the power of our fist a million times while our capacity for compassion has remained stagnant. It's so easy to destroy. It's so hard to win hearts, accomplish sincere self-rule, and leave genuine liberty in one's wake. Words are useless. Needed are soldiers trained to be peacekeepers.

Expanding the war

It's so easy to destroy. That's what armies are good at. Iraq is proof that it's hard to build, to provide water, electricity, tranquility and so foster freedom to flourish. Will Iran be next? 'Yes,' says Seymour M. Hersh in the *New Yorker*. He was the man who long ago exposed the My Lai incident where US troops under the leadership of Lt Calley in March 1968 killed hundreds of unarmed South Vietnamese citizens. Last year Hersh was the first to tell the world of the atrocities committed in the infamous Abu Ghraib prison near Baghdad, thanks to his excellent connections among the more humane elements of the CIA and other Washington agencies. There are still – thank God – a lot of people upset by the policies of the White House and the civilians in the Pentagon and are eager to talk.

Writes Hersh: "According to a former high-level intelligence official, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld met with the Joint Chiefs of Staff shortly after the election and told them, in essence: 'This is a war against terrorism, and Iraq is just one campaign. The Bush Administration is looking at this as a huge war zone. Next, we're going to have the Iranian campaign. We've declared war and the bad guys, wherever they are, are the enemy. This is the last hurrah – we've got four years, and want to come out of this saying we won the war on

terrorism."

Henry Kissinger, who has dealt with a wide array of characters, once said that Rumsfeld is the most ruthless man he ever met. A very scary prospect, because, says Hersh, "The war on terrorism would be expanded, and effectively placed under the Pentagon's – read Rumsfeld's – control. The President has signed a series of findings and executive orders authorizing secret commando groups and other Special Forces units to conduct covert operations against suspected terrorist targets in as many as ten nations in the Middle East and South Asia."

This means that Rumsfeld no longer has to tell Congress what he's doing. No more political meddling. Carte Blanche. That's why I think this second term of Mr Bush is going to be more scary than the first one.

So I pray American arrogance be curbed. I pray for ever higher oil prices – forcing conservation – and ballooning budget deficits so that financially the USA is cornered and unable to pursue its policies – policies designed to slash Social Security, enrich the rich, attack Iran, weaken environmental laws.

Perhaps this is the last gasp of a waning superpower. There is a growing perception among world leaders that the United States is a declining, overstretched giant, albeit one with the raw power to strike. American military and economic dominance may still be the central fact of world affairs, but its limits are becoming ever more evident, reflected in the dollar's steady descent on foreign exchange markets.

It all makes for a very 'interesting' 2005. Keep tuned. Perhaps this will indeed be the year when longstanding problems for the United States finally do boil over. However, don't expect Washington to accept the gradual demise of its economic and military power lightly. A cornered animal is the most dangerous.



Past columns can be seen at 'hielemac.ca.' Comments are welcome. Bert Hielema (bert@hielemac.ca)

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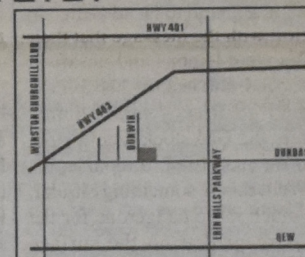
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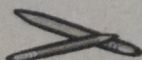
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Love all your children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Home address is: Brookview Apt#106 - 72 Towncentre Townsend ON N0A 1S0 Personals Christian woman, 26, in southwestern Ontario looking for relationship. Enjoys camping, walking, outdoors and movies. Is a member of the Christian Reformed Church. Looking for someone in late 20's to early 30's. Please respond to: Christian Courier File #2746 1 Hiscott St St Catharines ON L2R 1C7 For Rent Anyone planning to vacation in VICTORIA, BC , our home is available for rent from mid May until July 1, 2005. 2 bedroom home, fully furnished included utilities, internet access, cable and phone \$600 per month. For more information call (250)477-6021 or email: henrymar@telus.net VICTORIA, BC large house for rent April 1 - 30 \$250 a week or \$900 mo. Call 250-478-6342	 INGE ENSING The Lord took unto himself at the Guelph General Hospital on Tuesday, January 18, 2005 Inge (Klapwyk) Ensing in her 65th year. Beloved wife of Henk Ensing. "Who can separate us from the love of Christ." Romans 8:35 Dear mother of Richard and his wife Deborah of Rockwood, Steven and his wife Jeanette of Guelph, and the late David and Jeffrey. Loved Oma of Chelsey, Angela, Tyler, Lyndsay, Tanya, Erin, and Julia. Dear sister of Dick Klapwyk and his wife Marilyn of Alberta, Ray Kapwyk and his wife Phyllis of Washington, John Klapwyk and his wife Joan of Salem, Pete Klapwyk and his wife Clara of Elora, Mary and her husband Harry Van Dyke of Cambridge, Neil Klapwyk and his wife Ria of Guelph, Harry Klapwyk and his wife Teresa of Castor Centre, Andy Klapwyk and his wife Ruth of Innerkip, Jack Klapwyk and his wife Hieke of Elora and Ed Klapwyk and his wife Wilma of Fergus. The Funeral was Friday morning January 21 at First Christian Reformed Church in Guelph with Rev. Jack Vande-hoef officiating. Interment at Woodlawn Memorial Park. As expressions of sympathy donations to Beginnings of Guelph would be appreciated by the family (cards available at the funeral home or email info@gilbertmacintyreandson.com). Correspondence: Mr. Henk Ensing, 5416 Wellington Rd #39 RR#5 Guelph ON N1H 6J2 March 26, 1926 Schoonoord, Drenthe January 4, 2005 Woodstock, ON After a courageous battle with cancer, the Lord took to His eternal home, our dear uncle HENDRIK ROODE in his 79th year We his nieces and nephews and families, think back with great fondness to all that he meant to us. Uncle Henk and his family have always been so much part of our lives. He will be missed a lot. Our prayers are with our dear aunt Diane and her family. May God sustain them with his comforting care. Ralph & Anne Koops, Cambridge, ON Hazel & Andrew Siderius, Brampton, ON Anne & Al Vander Ziel, Two Harbors, MN Wilma & Clarence Sol, Kitchener, ON Harry & Beth Koops, Platte, SD and families. Den Haag May 4, 1912 Calgary AB Dec. 23, 2004 JOHANNA WILHELMINA (Willy) HAASDIJK (nee Scheffer) passed away peacefully in the Lord, at the age of 92. Beloved wife of the late Egbertus (Bert) Haasdijk (1978). Loved mother of: Ed & Dinie Haasdyk, Kelowna BC Fred & Sheila, Julie, James & Noreen, Glen & Teresa, Caroline & Byron Porritt Rita & Phil Buitendyk, Spruce Grove AB Donna & Rick Fillion, Linda & Kevin Christman, Heather & Larry Adam, Theo & Kim Ulrich & Liya Haasdyk, Calgary AB Rob, Dave, Joel, Bronwyn Rene & Helen Haasdyk, Edmonton AB Anne & Jason Summach, Alice & Ernst Gerhardt, Heidi & Matt Haddrell Jerry & Kathy Haasdyk, Kempton Park, South Africa Karin & Matt LePage, Greg & Sharon, Jeremy, Mary, Tim Joyce & Paul Wiersma, Summerland BC Sharon & Kurt Vos, Rachel, Carlo, Daniel 18 great-grandchildren. Sister Nel de Jongh in Den Haag. A memorial service was held on December 30, 2004 at Emmanuel Christian Reformed Church in Calgary. Rev. Frank Breisch officiated. Correspondence address: Ulrich Haasdyk 37 Tuscany Valley Park NW Calgary AB T3L 2B6 
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or

EXPERIENCED PRINCIPAL effective August 1, 2006

Our vision for the future includes expansion of the student body and supporting community, and continued development of an integrated Christian curriculum. The qualified candidate for Vice-principal will be an educator with significant teaching experience, hold a valid teaching certificate and either have, or be working towards the Christian School Principal's Diploma or Certificate. The ability to clearly articulate an integrated Christian worldview and its implication for education is mandatory. The individual appointed as **Vice-principal** will work closely with our present principal with a view to becoming principal in August 2006 when it is the stated intention of our present principal to retire. In the alternative, if an **experienced principal** is hired, he/she will begin official duties on August 1, 2006. If you feel challenged by either role, please send your resume, a statement of faith, and your philosophy of Christian education to:

Pete Weening, Principal,
Lambton Christian School Society
Sarnia Christian School
1273 Exmouth St.,
Sarnia ON N7S 1W9
(519) 383-7750 Email: pweening@lambtonchristian.com
www.lambtonchristian.com

Closing date for applications: March 1, 2005

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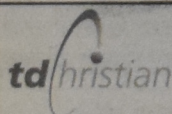
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Windsor ON N9E 2B4

Information: 519-966-7424; fax: 519-966-9519



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DORDT COLLEGE

ELECTRONIC MEDIA PRODUCTION COORDINATOR AND INSTRUCTOR

Dordt College is seeking a person to serve as *Electronic Media Production Coordinator and Instructor* to communicate the college's message to its constituency and prospective students. Primary responsibilities will include producing new media marketing materials and teaching courses in the Communications program. Specific tasks would include preparing multi-media DVDs and/or CDs in conjunction with the marketing efforts of the Admissions and Advancement Offices, supervising workstudy students in DVD production, maintaining cameras, lights, soundboards, computers and other electronic equipment, and working with the graphic artists to develop a consistent look between Dordt's printed materials and its new media products. Teaching some courses as needed within the Communication Department, and providing internship and field experience opportunities for Dordt students is also desired.

Candidates should possess a graduate degree in communication with an emphasis on new media. Knowledge of camera, lighting, soundboard, and computer equipment is essential. Strong writing and interviewing skills are desired, along with good video photography and DVD authoring and editing skills. Knowledge of digital editing programs (Studio Pro, Photoshop, After Effects, etc.), along with strong organizational skills and the ability to work with and teach students are also desired.

Qualified candidates with a personal commitment to a Reformed, biblical faith and the mission of Dordt College should forward a letter of application and resume to Susan Droog, Director of Human Resources at the address listed below. A review of all applications will begin immediately and continue until the position is filled.

Dordt College

498 Fourth Ave NE, Sioux Center IA 51250

Phone: (712) 722-6017 Fax: (712) 722-1198

E-mail: sdroog@dordt.edu

Dordt College does not discriminate as to sex, age, national origin, marital status or against those who are disabled.

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John Van Pelt
Chatham Christian High Sch
475 Kell Dr. South
Chatham ON N7M 6L8
phone: 519-352-4980,
fax: 519-352-4041
E-mail:
johnvanpelt@chathamchristian.ca

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Classifieds



MARANATHA HOMES

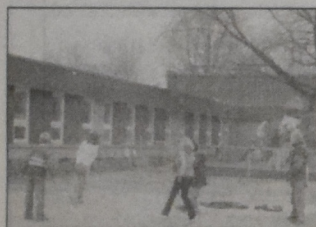
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SATURDAY, MARCH 5, 2005

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Celebrating 40 years of

Christian Education at

**London District Christian
Secondary School.**

Celebration - Fund Raising

Dinner @ 6:30pm @ LDCSS.

For more information contact

Christine Renkema @

alstein@execulink.com



Events/Advertising

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- Feb 12** Immanuel Christian Reformed Church musical event with The Liberation Choir performing many familiar peices. 2nd Christian Reformed Church on 444 Steele Av W., **Brampton**, 8:00 pm.. Tickets are \$20.00 at the door or call 905-451-8137. See ad this issue
- Mar 5** **Mission Emphasis Day**, Covenant Christian Church, **Wyoming**, Ontario. Speaker: DR. MIKE GOHEEN from Redeemer College Theme: The Great Commision Tel. 1-519-899-2384 or 1-519-845-1613 e-mail: jazekveld@rivernet.net
- Mar 5** "Growing in God's Grace". Celebrating 40 years of Christian Education at **London** District Christian Secondary School. Celebration - Fund Raising Dinner @ 6:30pm @ LDCSS. For more information contact Christine Renkema @ alstein@execulink.com .
- Mar 18, 19** **The Woodstock Dutch Theatre Group** presents "DE RUIGE RITSELAARS" Een Klucht in 4 bedrijven door Hub Fober. **Woodstock**, Market Centre Theatre: Friday at 8pm & Saturday at 2pm and 8pm. See ad.
- Mar 20** 3:00 pm: Jonathan Oldengarm performs in the Distinguished Organists in Recital series at First United Church, King and William Streets, **Waterloo**, Ontario. The series celebrates the relocation and refurbishment of the 1971 Gabriel Kney organ formerly located in London's Aeolian Hall. **ADMISSION: \$20.00**. For tickets, call the church office at 519-745-8487, or 578-4006 after 5 p.m. Apr 8 The Woodstock Dutch Theatre Group presents "DE RUIGE RITSELAARS", Een Klucht in 4 bedrijven door Hub Fober, at the Christian Heritage School, **Jordan** at 8pm. See ad for ticket information.
- Apr 8** **The Woodstock Dutch Theatre Group** presents "DE RUIGE RITSELAARS", Een Klucht in 4 bedrijven door Hub Fober, at the Christian Heritage School, **Jordan** at 8pm. See ad p. 22 for ticket information.
- Apr 9** **Concert of Sacred Music** by **St. Thomas Crescendo Male Choir** 7:30 p.m. **Bethel CRC**, 716 Classic Drive, **London** (Freewill offering) Info: (519) 637-4357
- May 1** **Concert of Sacred Music** by **St. Thomas Crescendo Male Choir** 7:30 p.m. **Knox Presbyterian Church**, 55 Hincks Street, **St. Thomas** (Freewill offering) Info: (519) 637-4357
- May 7** **Liberation Choir 60th Anniversary Concert**, with the Guelph Symphony Orchestra, 7:30 at **Hamilton Place**. Tickets: \$20, \$30, \$40. Available from choir members/ box office/ www.organs.ca
- July 1-3** **Nobleford CRC** 100 year anniversary celebrations with picnic, banquet and services. For more information contact Bert/Pat Konynebelt at (403)824-3442 or by e-mail at bpkbelt@telus.net



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Immanuel

Christian Reformed Church

The Church that burned, becoming the church on fire, would like you to join us for a Valentines Concert featuring **The Liberation Choir** on

February 12, 2005 at 8:00pm

in the Second Christian Reformed Church
444 Steeles Ave. W. **Brampton**.

Tickets are \$20.00 and can be purchased at the door, or contact Bill Wybenga (905)794-0131 or Dittie Hay (905)846-5533. *Proceeds from this concert will be used to replace the musical instruments destroyed in the Church fire.*

MISSION EMPHASIS DAY MARCH 5 2005

at the COVENANT CHRISTIAN CHURCH, Wyoming, ON

Speaker: DR. MIKE GOHEEN from Redeemer College

Theme: The Great Commision and the Church's Mission today

1st workshop: Dr. Mike Goheen
Worship and the Church's Mission

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Registration 9:30 - 10:00 AM

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\$5.00 fee (includes lunch)



Redeemer University College
is pleased to announce the inauguration of

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as Professor of Religion and Theology

You are warmly invited to attend
the inaugural ceremony on
Friday, March 11, 2005,
at 7:30 pm in the Auditorium.
Standing reception will follow.

His inaugural address is entitled:
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519-745-8487, or 578-4006 (after 5:00 pm)

The Woodstock Dutch Theatre Group Presents ...

"DE RUIGE RITSELAARS"

Een Klucht in 4 bedrijven door Hub Fober



WOODSTOCK, Market Centre Theatre:

Friday March 18 at 8pm & Saturday March 19 at 2pm and 8pm

JORDAN, Christian Heritage School:
Friday April 8 at 8pm

For tickets to the above performances please send cheque
and stamped self addressed envelope to:

Adrian Rodenburg - RR 4
Thamesford, Ontario NOM 2M0
Tel: 519-283-6285

or-

Jan Wubben - 390 Mill Street
Woodstock, Ontario N4S 7V6
Tel: 519-539-8940

Tickets: \$12.-

Net proceeds to Children's Hospital of Western Ontario

News

Wave of donations will fund long-term programs in tsunami region

BURLINGTON, Ont. — The Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC) is anticipating receiving between \$8- and \$9-million (US) in donations and grants for the response to the tsunami in South Asia, including more than \$3-million (Cdn) already raised in Canada. As gifts continue to flow in, CRWRC is developing a multi-year plan to meet the needs of disaster survivors in India, Indonesia, and Sri Lanka.

"We are overwhelmed by the generous response and the confidence shown in CRWRC," said CRWRC-Canada Director, Wayne DeJong. "The Canadian government, through the Canadian International Development Agency, has also expressed its confidence by approving CRWRC as eligible to receive a 1:1 match on the funds raised in Canada. These resources will enable us to show God's love to thousands of people who are in desperate need."

CRWRC is an international relief and development organization that works in more than 30 coun-

tries around the world. Through its ongoing partnerships in South Asia, CRWRC was able to respond to the tsunami the day after the disaster struck, providing food and emergency supplies to thousands of families. Today, CRWRC is continuing to work through these international partnerships to meet ongoing needs.

"The needs in South Asia aren't just to provide emergency supplies," said Bruce Campbell-Janz, CRWRC Relief Project Manager. "In Sri Lanka, for example, more than 80 percent of fishing vessels were damaged or destroyed by the storm. That means that fishing families now have no way to provide for themselves. In other areas, farmers' fields were completely destroyed and will need to be desalinated before they can be used again."

CRWRC is responding to the longer-term needs by helping people to obtain new boats and nets, helping farmers to rehabilitate their fields, and helping more than 1,000 families to build new homes so that

they can move out of temporary camps. CRWRC is also planning to revitalize whole communities by helping them start long-term development programs that will meet the ongoing challenges of poverty, hunger, and malnutrition.

"We've been working in Asia for many years, and we are committed to working there for many more," deJong said. "We want to help communities overcome not only this most recent disaster, but also the other obstacles that are keeping them poor. Too often, chronic poverty makes disasters like this one especially devastating for poor communities. Through the generous support of so many North Americans, we are now positioned to make a lasting difference."

For more information about these programs, please visit www.crwrc.org or call 1-800-730-3490. CRWRC is a Christian non-profit organization of the Christian Reformed Church in N.A. with offices in Burlington, Ont. and Grand Rapids, Mich.

Foodgrains Bank to permit purchase of food abroad

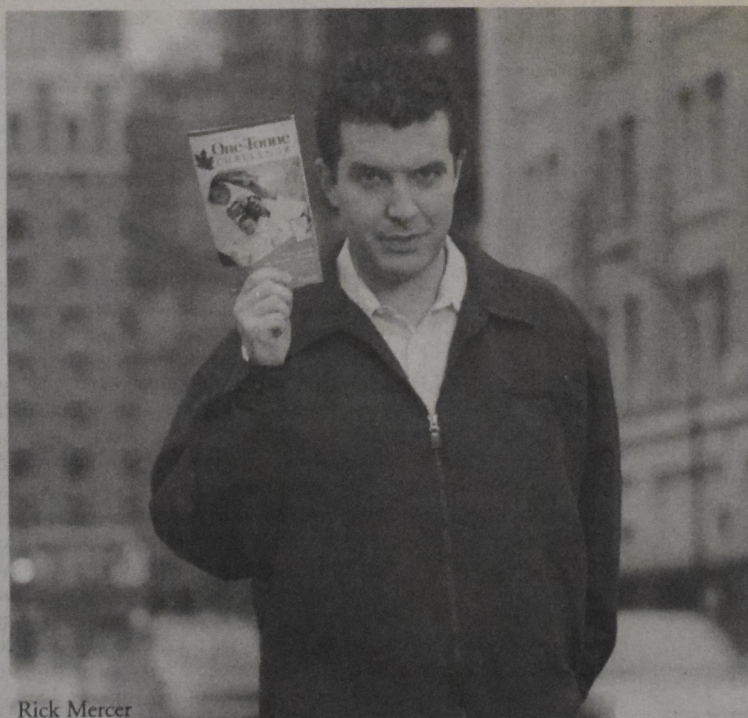
The National Farmers Union has written a letter to the editor commenting on Canadian Foodgrains Bank's efforts to change Canadian government food aid procurement rules. These changes would allow a larger proportion of food aid to be purchased from developing country farmers. The NFU is understandably concerned about the impact of such rule changes on Canadian farmers, particularly in the current challenging economic circumstances.

Canadian Foodgrains Bank shares this concern. The Foodgrains Bank was conceived by Canadian farmers and continues, despite the serious farm income crisis, to be generously supported by these farmers. Before seeking to have Canadian food aid rules changed, we consulted extensively with those farmers who are the foundation of our support. There has been overwhelming support for these changes which will let us do more to reduce hunger.

Canadian food aid purchases of various commodities represent less than 1% of Canadian production. The changes we are seeking would only fractionally reduce even these already minor purchases. The impact on Canadian commodity prices and Canadian farmers' wallets will be minimal. On the other hand, the positive benefits for hungry people and developing country farmers will be significant.

Two of the four major food aid donors — Australia and Europe — have already made similar changes to their food aid rules. Only the US, whose many times larger food aid program is part of their farm legislation, does not permit any developing country purchases.

Jim Cornelius
Executive Director
Canadian Foodgrains Bank



Rick Mercer

Every Canadian loves a challenge, right?

On average, each Canadian produces five tonnes of greenhouse gases a year. Driving, heating and cooling our homes, using appliances... almost anything we do that uses fossil fuels for energy also creates greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. And these emissions are causing our climate to change.

Take the One-Tonne Challenge — reduce your energy use and your GHG emissions by 20%, or one tonne. You'll save money, and help to protect our climate and our air quality.

Get your Guide to the One-Tonne Challenge.

Visit climatechange.gc.ca or call

1 800 O-Canada (1 800 622-6232), TTY 1 800 465-7735.

One-Tonne Challenge Take action on climate change



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